

DISCARD

JANUARY 1991
\$3.00/£2.00

MONTHLY REVIEW

AN INDEPENDENT SOCIALIST MAGAZINE

KERALA STATE, INDIA: RADICAL REFORM AS DEVELOPMENT

Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chassin

COMMENTS ON KERALA

Maria Helena Moreira Alves, Samir Amin,
Prabhat Patnaik, and Carlos M. Vilas

REMAKING AMERICAN MARXISM

Manning Marable

Doing Well by Doing Good

W.H. Locke Anderson

VOL. 42

8

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REVIEW OF THE MONTH: Kerala State, India: Radical Reform as Development by Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chassin	1
Comments on Kerala by Maria Helena Moreira Alves	24
Samir Amin	28
Prabhat Patnaik	33
Carlos M. Vilas	37
REMAKING AMERICAN MARXISM by Manning Marable	40
BOOKS:	
Learning from Lenin by Michael Löwy	54
Doing Well by Doing Good by W.H. Locke Anderson	58

MONTHLY REVIEW (ISSN 0027-0520) is a publication of Monthly Review Foundation, a non-profit institution. It is published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright © 1991, by Monthly Review. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes (Form 3579) to Monthly Review Foundation, 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001.

EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS:

122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. Telephone: (212) 691-2555.

Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self addressed envelope. MR is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin and the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7729, Baltimore, MD 21218; tel.: (301) 243-2471.

NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTOR:

B. De Boer, Inc., 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110.

SUBSCRIPTION PRICE:

U.S.: One year \$22, students and senior citizens \$17; Foreign \$26; students and senior citizens \$19.

Libraries and Institutions: U.S. \$42; Foreign \$45.

Additional Postage: First Class (U.S. and Canada) \$12; Airmail: Foreign \$15.

EDITORS: Paul M. Sweezy
Associate Editor: W. H. Locke Anderson

Harry Magdoff
Assistant Editor: Joel Lefkowitz

Leo Huberman (1903-1968)
Circulation Manager: Martin Paddio

NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

A large part of this issue is devoted to Kerala, the most densely populated state in India, located on the southwestern coast of the country and the objective of the first European traders and imperialists. Keralans had a long history of resisting British rule and carried their struggle against oppression over into the post-independence period. Since the 1950s, the state has been governed, with short interruptions, by the Communist Party (Marxist), compiling a record of achievements for the masses that is unique not only in the Indian federation but in the whole third world. This is the story, understandably blacked out of the bourgeois media, which is told by Richard Franke and Barbara Chassin in their thoroughly researched report on pages 1-23 of this issue, followed by comments by four of the international left's leading authorities on revolutionary struggles in the third world.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the Kerala story. It proves what socialists have always believed and orthodox social scientists have claimed to be impossible, i.e., that deeply rooted popular struggles under principled and honest leadership can make significant progress toward the satisfaction of the basic needs of *all the people*. This is not to imply that the average standard of living of Keralans is high or that Kerala has a robust rate of economic growth. Kerala's achievements have been made possible by redistributive policies that have successfully channeled resources into land reform, housing, education, health care, minimum wages, and the

(Continued on inside back cover)

KERALA STATE, INDIA: RADICAL REFORM AS DEVELOPMENT

By RICHARD W. FRANKE AND BARBARA H. CHASIN

Redistribution of wealth, provision of basic necessities, and popular involvement in the political process are the hallmarks of a remarkable radical attempt at social change in Kerala state on the southwest coast of India.

Kerala (pronounced Ker' uh luh) is particularly important for third world countries, where centuries of colonialism and decades of Western-sponsored development efforts have gone hand-in-hand with continuing high levels of inequality and misery for poor farmers and farm laborers. While most third world countries seek to advance primarily through boosting production and investing in expensive technology, Kerala has implemented a program of radical social reforms, with land reform at the center of its efforts. And although it suffers from overwhelming poverty and is one of the world's most densely populated regions, Kerala has achieved some of the third world's highest scores on important indicators of development.

The life expectancy in Kerala—68 years—is closer to the

Richard W. Franke is Professor of Anthropology and Barbara H. Chasin is Professor of Sociology at Montclair State College, New Jersey. Full documentation for this article is contained in the book from which it is adapted, Richard W. Franke and Barbara H. Chasin, *Kerala: Radical Reform as Development in an Indian State* (San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy, 1989). The book is available from the Institute, 145 Ninth Street, San Francisco, CA 94103 for \$6.00 plus 90 cents postage and handling. The authors are grateful to Marc Miller, senior editor of *Technology Review*, who assisted in the production of a similar article for that journal and to Indian researchers Thomas Isaac and Nata Duvvury who provided them with up-to-date Kerala government statistics.

U.S. average of 75 years than to India's 57 years or the abysmally low 52 years in a World Bank sample of 37 low-income countries with 658 million people (excluding China and India). Kerala's infant mortality rate is 27 per thousand births, compared with 106 for the low-income countries and 86 for India. The birth rate, at 22 per thousand, is comparable to the U.S. rate of 16; the figures are 43 for the low-income countries and 32 for India. Almost three-quarters of Keralans can read or write; fewer than half are literate in the rest of India and the other poor countries (see Table 1).*

These indicators are especially important because they reveal the distribution of social and economic gains. If wealth is highly concentrated, per capita income can be high while most people have little. But, literacy rates improve only when a great number of people learn to read and write. The average life span rises minimally if only the elite live longer. Infant mortality and birth rates change little unless medical care is widespread.

Just as striking, Kerala's quality of life benefits are fairly evenly distributed among men and women, urban and rural areas, and low and high castes (see Table 2). Male literacy, for example, is just 9 percentage points higher than that of females, while the difference is 22 points for India as a whole. In India's urban areas, people are nearly twice as literate as they are in rural ones throughout India, while in Kerala the disparity is slight. For both infant mortality and birth rates, rural Kerala is only slightly behind the cities.

The results of studies Indian agencies have conducted on productivity and basic services are similarly impressive. Kerala ranks first among all Indian states in output per unit of area. The state is also first on 15 of 20 measures of basic services—including roads, post offices, and schools—and ranks very high on the five others (see Table 3).

Kerala's achievements are, of course, most meaningful to the people who live there, but the data also have implications for economic development strategies elsewhere. In every developing nation, the many possible paths follow from a

*Tables will be found at the end of the article.

fundamental issue: which is more effective, growth or redistribution? Governments can strive to generate more output by stimulating capitalist enterprise. Higher income levels generally do produce longer life, more education, and fewer infant deaths, but only after very large and sustained increases that have so far eluded most third world countries. Alternatively, governments can redistribute wealth and then sponsor growth. Comparative studies show that for any given average per capita income, even in high-income countries, redistribution provides substantially better education, longer life, and lower infant mortality than does growth alone.

In practice, the two paths to development are usually incompatible. Only Taiwan and the two Koreas have recorded both substantial growth and redistribution. Many nations—including most in Latin America, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia—had grown considerably, at least before the 1980s, but with little redistribution. Some of the world's least developed countries have failed on both counts. Only Tanzania, Sri Lanka, and the state of Kerala have chosen redistribution while remaining in the capitalist economic system.

Thus, while this small coastal strip contains just 27 million people and 1 percent of India's land, Kerala is more than a tiny, exotic subtropical detail in the world's second most populous country. It is an experiment in radical reform as a modern development strategy.

Ecology, Geography, and a History of Struggle

Kerala's achievements rest on a number of factors. First, its rather even distribution of resources has helped foster a similarly even pattern of settlement, which has simplified the delivery of health and educational services. Second, Kerala has long been a major international trading center. People in the region are thought to have exchanged cardamom and cinnamon with Babylonia 5,000 years ago. In the nineteenth century, plantations and other capitalist enterprises sprang up under British rule, and a working class was created. These developments combined with the ancient cosmopolitan traditions to establish conditions for radical organizing, the third,

and most important, factor in understanding modern-day Kerala. In the twentieth century, this region of India witnessed significant political movements among peasants, workers, and low-caste people who wanted more than formal independence from the British empire. They saw in independence a promise of increased income and expanded democratic rights.

In Kerala, such movements were far larger than in most of India. Although other states, such as West Bengal and Tripura, have also elected communist governments in recent years, Kerala's radical tradition is much longer.

In the 1950s, India's national government reorganized states according to language groups, creating the state of Kerala in 1956 as a single Malayalam-speaking unit. In 1957, voters of the newly formed state of Kerala elected the first communist majority to the state legislature. Since then, Kerala's voters have elected three solidly leftist governments (1967-1969, 1980-1982, and 1987-present), and a left-right coalition that ruled through the 1970s carried out many policies of its left predecessor. Worker and peasant militancy have survived British colonial police repression, the 1964 split in the Indian Communist Party, Naxalite guerrilla adventurism, several incidents of interference from anti-left governments in New Delhi, Indira Gandhi's Emergency of the mid-1970s, and the continuing hostility of local landowners, bankers, and powerful right-wing Christian, Muslim, and Hindu fundamentalist groups.

In fact, movements of workers and small farmers in Kerala have persevered for the most part throughout the past 80 years. They have produced and sustained leaders from all the major castes and religions. As recently as 1988, 750,000 people joined popular actions in Kerala's communist heartland of Alleppey.

The radical organizations of the region compete with one another for members and influence but generally agree that poor people must be the main beneficiaries of development. Despite the many twists and turns of party coalitions and governments, these groups provide the constant element in Kerala's political culture. With leftist governments in

power, major laws have been passed to redistribute income and income-producing assets such as land. But even when conservative governments have held sway, Kerala's workers and peasants have won reforms. The reason is that the left parties, unlike U.S. parties, are made up of highly organized peasant associations and labor unions, which agitate for change no matter who holds formal state power.

Kerala's major left party is the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M or CPM). This party was the left faction in the 1964 split which reflected the Sino-Soviet split worldwide. The CPM had the more pro-China orientation, but has since developed its international positions independently. Most of the party cadre and voters went with the CPM. In the 1987 state assembly elections, the CPM received 25 percent of the vote as part of a left democratic front that garnered 45 percent, narrowly defeating a right-wing front led by the Indian National Congress. Eleven percent of the vote went to far-right groups that appear to be a growing threat across India.

The other major left group is the Communist Party of India (CPI), which has important centers of influence in north India. But, in Kerala—as in West Bengal where a left front also holds power—the CPI has become a junior partner to the CPM. In Kerala in 1987, the CPI received 9 percent of the votes. Other left groupings include several small socialist and labor parties and a left splinter of the Indian National Congress. These left parties and the mass organizations—unions, peasant associations, youth groups, and the like—are the main organizations responsible for Kerala's numerous reforms.

Land Reform

Most third world countries have carried out some type of land reform, but the rich have often benefited more than the poor. By contrast, Kerala's 1969 land reform is one of the most thorough and successful in the third world. One-and-a-half million tenants received full title to either rice fields they worked, house-compound land, or both.

Just before the 1969 act, 8 percent of landowning

households controlled 44 percent of all rented land and 62 percent of irrigated rental lands. Landholding inequality among farming households was the third worst among India's states.

"Inferior" tenants (*verumpattamdar*), who were the actual cultivators, were in the most difficult position. Despite some British and state legislation to protect them, their leases or subleases could usually be terminated by a class of superior tenants or by the actual landowners (*jenmies*) above them. Because of this insecurity, the *verumpattamdar* could be compelled to pay exorbitant rents. One regional study in the 1940s found that cultivator households paid half and sometimes more than three-quarters of their gross returns to the classes above them.

The same *jenmies* owned the small plots of land on which tenants and farm laborers built their houses and grew bananas, coconuts, cashews, mangoes, cassava, and other crops to feed themselves. The threat of eviction from such lands was a powerful weapon. Most of the landlords were also high-caste Hindu priests, while tenants were mostly low caste, and farm laborers were the former "untouchables." The land tenure system thus held in place the many forms of caste privilege and oppression which outsiders associate with India.

Frequent rebellions broke out against tenancy. From 1836 to 1853, for example, more than 20 uprisings occurred in Malabar, now northern Kerala, in which mostly Muslim tenants attacked mostly high-caste Hindu landlords. Some 10,000 people died in the Mapilla—or Muslim—rebellion in 1921, but the 1930 law that resulted did nothing for the poorest tenants.

The turning point came in 1957, when the new state of Kerala elected a communist majority to the state legislature. The government included cabinet members who were themselves seasoned militants of peasant and worker movements. Their electoral charge included radical land reform and they acted to meet this goal. The landlords then organized demonstrations and appealed to the central government to dismiss the communists. Although Kerala's communists pressed ahead with their land reform program, it was struck

down by the Kerala state supreme court, and the state government was indeed dismissed in 1959. Kerala entered a period of political instability, with recurrent presidential rule from New Delhi. In the late 1960s, tenants took matters into their own hands, planting red flags on their tenancies and claiming the right to farm the land without paying rent. Popular pressure became so great that most politicians, including India's then-ruling Congress Party, supported land reform, and a comprehensive program, although weaker than that of 1959, became law in 1969.

Two components of this reform appear to have been ineffective—a ceiling on the size of land holdings and a rice levy on the largest landowners that was to be collected by the government and redistributed to peasants and farm laborers. However, tenancy reforms have massively redistributed land rights—and, therefore, power.

The abolition of both household and field tenancy transformed landlords—mostly high-caste Brahmin priests—into teachers, government administrators, and medium-sized farmers. Although some have suffered, most now contribute to the development of Kerala's economy. In any case, the reform compensated landlords. For rice fields, they received 16 times one-year's fair rent, as determined by a government committee. The compensation for house-compound land was 25 percent of the market value, with half paid from a government land-purchase trust and half by the former tenant.

At the other end, however, many new small landowners have suffered from the declining price of rice relative to other products. They often lack the necessary capital to plant more lucrative crops, such as coconuts or rubber. Consequently, the direct economic benefits of the land reform have been less than hoped for, illustrating the difficulties of transforming a feudal system into small-farmer private production when incomes stagnate and agricultural prices are unpredictable. Nevertheless, land reform has improved the vast majority of lives in Kerala's countryside. For tenants who received rice paddies, the land is usually the source of at least half their basic food needs. Now there is no rent to pay and no fear of eviction. Life—while below any reasonable standard for the

modern world—has improved greatly within a single generation.

Food for All

Nutrition in Kerala is at least equal to, and perhaps slightly better than, that of the rest of India, despite the state's much lower per capita income. While it is difficult to measure actual caloric intake, data the Indian Council of Medical Research has collected on the growth of children suggest that Kerala's people are well fed in the Indian context. Yet Kerala's children remain far below international standards in height and weight.

Food in Kerala is widely available at controlled prices through school lunch programs, feeding programs at nurseries for infants and pregnant and lactating women, and "ration shops." Public distribution of food via these shops is Kerala's most extensive mechanism for insuring adequate nutrition. Nearly all Kerala households receive ration cards that allow them to buy rice, cooking oil, and other basic commodities, with the amounts of each determined by how much land they own. All goods are also available on the parallel private market.

Established in Kerala during the First World War, ration shops came to serve large numbers of people only after India's 1964 food shortages. At that time, Kerala's government purchased rice and wheat to ensure that enough was available. Since then, Kerala's shops have been the most effective in India, with at least one located within two kilometers of 99 percent of Kerala's villages. In contrast, only 35 percent of the villages in India as a whole have a shop so close by and most Indian states provide little assistance to poor families outside the cities. By 1988, almost 13,000 ration shops accounted for about 15 percent of total calorie intake and 20 percent of total protein intake in Kerala. Some stores are cooperatives, but most are private businesses that receive a fixed profit.

School feeding programs in the southern Kerala districts of Travancore and Cochin started in the 1940s. Expanding those programs to all students was proposed in the late 1950s during the first communist ministry. The proposal was real-

ized in 1961 with the assistance of CARE, which provided most of the food until just a few years ago. Now the state government funds the programs, which have fed about 75 percent of students aged six to ten since the early 1970s.

By 1987, over 2 million children received daily meals of about 410 calories and 15 grams of protein. Until that year, the programs offered a daily hot lunch just to students in grades one to four. In June 1987, the new leftist coalition expanded coverage to grades five to seven—reaching 3 million children.

Many Kerala women and their infants receive a free meal each day at village nurseries that women's associations run with government funds. In the early 1970s, these centers fed more than 150,000 women and infants daily. In 1988, over 9,000 centers served 265,000 women and infants.

Like the land reform, Kerala's extensive program of low-cost food to the poor has resulted in large measure from peasant and worker struggles. Much of the political clout behind the expansion of the program came from peasant associations and trade unions fighting from the 1930s to the present to prevent food hoarding and price speculation. Today, Kerala villagers consider low-cost rice and other staples a permanent right which they expect all state political parties to uphold.

The Right to Health

After food, perhaps nothing is more crucial to life and welfare than health care. In Kerala, ordinary people have successfully struggled for health care. They continue to struggle to maintain, expand, and improve it.

Kerala's children show the most dramatic benefits from health programs. The infant-mortality rate is very low, and children under five fare much better than in the rest of India. From 1968 to 1970, the latest period for which an appropriate comparison is available, Kerala recorded only 24 deaths per thousand children under five, far better than any other Indian state or the Indian average of 62 per thousand. UNICEF has suggested that this measure is the single most significant indicator of development.

Kerala has vastly improved health through better housing, sanitation, water, and immunization programs. Also, health-care facilities are better funded and staffed and more accessible than in the rest of India.

Poor housing can be a major source of disease. Dirt floors and palm roofs attract bacteria and mosquitoes. Overcrowding exacerbates the spread of infections and parasites. After the 1971 Indian census found that 20 to 25 percent of housing in Kerala was unfit for habitation, the state adopted and expanded a national home building program for landless laborers.

Financed by state and central-government revenues, the Kerala plan is known as the One *Lakh* Houses Scheme, after the Indian word for 100,000. In each of Kerala's 960 villages, 100 houses were to be built, for a total of 96,000 units. Although the plan cost far more than envisioned, 57,000 houses were constructed by 1978. Each house has 250 square feet of floor space, three rooms, a hard foundation, a cement floor, sun-dried brick walls, and a tile roof on hardwood beams taken from the state's forests. The houses of several tens of thousands more low-income families were built or improved under supplementary state programs that continue to the present.

Beginning in Travancore in the late 1800s, government-sponsored Town Improvement Committees and Rural Conservancy Establishments took on the task of improving sanitation. These organizations disinfected wells and water tanks, removed feces from roads, graveled the roads, and supervised health conditions at markets and religious festivals. They also set construction of safe latrines as a goal, but progress has been slow. Many rural families still use open-air sites, and health experts consider budget allotments for latrines and sewage insufficient to meet Kerala's ambitious 1990 target of safe waste disposal in 80 to 100 percent of urban areas and 25 percent of rural areas. By 1985, only 28 percent of urban areas and 2 percent of villages had fully operational sanitation facilities; the all-Indian rates were 28 percent for urban areas and less than 1 percent for rural areas.

Safe drinking water is probably the best way to curb the

spread of parasites and infections. In Kerala in 1980 and 1981, 29 percent of rural people and 72 percent of urban dwellers had potable water. By 1985, the rural figure had risen to 41 percent, and by 1988, 82 percent of the city dwellers had protected water. Nevertheless, Kerala does not stand out among Indian states, and gastrointestinal infections that cause diarrhea remain a hurdle. At the same time, only 1 percent of villages have serious water problems, among the fewest in India.

Preventive immunization and vaccination are Kerala's most impressive public-health projects. Smallpox vaccination in Travancore began in 1879. In 1935, 59 percent of the people of southern Kerala were protected, and by the following year nearly everyone in that area was. Similar programs attacked cholera and malaria. The latter disease required cleaning up mosquito breeding areas, which is a more difficult task than vaccination. In 1970, Kerala became the first state in India to entirely eradicate smallpox. Malaria has also been wiped out, and, in Kerala, unlike many parts of India, it has not recurred.

Kerala has India's most extensive medical facilities as well. By investing relatively more of its state budget in medical facilities, in 1982 Kerala had nearly four times as many hospitals and nearly twice the number of hospital beds per 100,000 people as the Indian average. The doctor-to-patient ratio was 18 percent above average, and Kerala spent 35 percent more per capita on health care (see Table 4).

Medical services are available throughout Kerala, and rural hospital beds are much closer to patients than is the case in the rest of India. This helps explain why, since 1965, 80 percent of all patients have received their treatment at hospitals rather than at less well-equipped primary health centers. In contrast, the second-best state, Tamil Nadu, has a 54 percent hospital treatment rate.

The state's provision of basic health care and its redistribution of wealth are the main explanations for a dramatic decline in birth rates. The 1986 rate of 22 per thousand women of childbearing age was about one-third below India's average. The birth rate declined first in the

districts of Travancore and Cochin, where public-health measures and access to health facilities developed earliest. Two Indian researchers found that in one Travancore suburb medically qualified personnel attended 72 percent of all births, compared with 8.5 percent in a village in Andhra Pradesh state.

The same study reported on the routine practices at one primary health center in Travancore, pointing up features that hundreds of millions of people in underdeveloped nations can only dream of. At the Kerala clinic all the staff were regularly at work, doctors and nurses came mostly from the same caste and gender as their patients, and the chief physician visited neighborhood sub-stations daily. The staff could refer serious cases to a fully equipped hospital nearby. The center had even more women on staff than the law required, boosting family-planning efforts.

While part of the explanation for Kerala's more extensive services and more dedicated physicians may lie in the idealism born of left-wing movements, the bottom line is that health workers are directly responsible to a militant and informed public. Doctors regularly showing up late for work will eventually find demonstrators at the clinic entrance—or at the doctor's home—local newspapers flooded with letters of complaint, and resolutions of complaint from local unions and civic groups going to their superiors in the government bureaucracy.

A Literate People

Education is one of the most powerful tools for loosening rigid social structures. Besides providing training and skills, education can, in the context of progressive political activism, elevate the self-esteem of the most oppressed so they can participate more fully in improving their own lives. In Kerala, education reaches even the poorest people.

Kerala stands out among all areas of the third world for its remarkable achievements in raising literacy levels. It has been well ahead of the rest of India since at least the beginning of the twentieth century, and the state continues to expand educational opportunities at about the same rate as the na-

tion. Kerala also stands far above the country as a whole in providing education across the barriers between genders, castes, and urban and rural areas (see Tables 1 and 2).

Kerala's nineteenth century educational achievements came from a series of enlightened rulers, who saw such steps as a way to resist a large-scale, Christian missionary assault. By the early twentieth century, however, the story became one of people struggling for knowledge, dignity, and better jobs, with caste improvement associations leading the way. A lower-middle-caste group, the Ezhavas, acted first, establishing the Ezhava Social Reform Movement in 1905. Caste improvement leaders also began founding magazines, working with trade unions and other organizations of the poor, and promoting rationalism and scientific thinking as weapons against the Hindu mysticism that justified the caste system.

Literacy became a major tactic for awakening worker and low-caste consciousness. In the 1920s and 1930s reading and writing circles were set up in villages. Prominent authors wrote stories and poems with strong Marxist and labor themes, and workers published poetry and narratives in union-sponsored publications. Village libraries were established, and literacy became a demand of the growing radical movement. By the early 1980s, Kerala had nearly 5,000 officially recognized village libraries, supported by community contributions and small state grants.

As a result, the literacy rate for low-caste people in Kerala is much greater than in the rest of India, and the education gap between higher and lower castes is the smallest. However, the continuing poverty of the former untouchables severely limits their ability to use Kerala's vastly expanded educational services. Most low-caste parents are still agricultural laborers, and they often must put their children to work in the fields during school hours to earn additional household income.

One solution to this problem is the lunch program, which helps keep low-caste children in school. Equally important is a large scholarship system. By 1988, over 587,000 low-caste and tribal students received scholarship aid—79 percent of all students in those categories. Another 65,000 got scholarships to higher-level technical schools and colleges,

and over 3,400 received dormitory accommodations and clothing allowances.

Two other striking features mark Kerala education. First, unlike other Indian states, Kerala has focused its expenditures on the lower levels, spreading basic literacy further but leaving higher education less advanced. Second, non-government education has played a major role. In 1963, the Kerala Peoples' Science Movement (KSSP) formed with the aim of "mobilization of the people through science." During the 1970s, the KSSP set up village study classes, medical camps, and literacy programs. Moreover, *jathas*—or parades—have taken puppet shows, guerrilla theater, and other informal modes of science education into neighborhoods and villages, telling people about environmental and other issues. In the 1980s, the KSSP has carried out mass education programs on AIDS and maternal health, and now publishes a widely read science magazine.

Kerala's citizens make great use of their education. For example, they boast the highest per capita newspaper consumption in India. There is also a substantial local magazine and book publishing industry. And the state exports educated employees to Bombay, Delhi, and the Middle East. Even Europe and the United States employ a significant number of Kerala nurses.

Many low-caste people who have gained literacy have become government employees, as well as officers in farmworkers' and other unions. Kerala's "caste reservation" policy is similar to affirmative action in the United States but is much stronger. The cabinet elected in 1957 included four former untouchables, as did a progressive coalition a decade later. In 1971, a former untouchable became a district collector, one of the highest appointed administrative offices. Caste and tribe representation in higher government jobs exceeded 10 percent in 1988, fairly representative of the population.

Women in Kerala

Kerala's major reforms were not specifically aimed at improving the situation of women, who are presently 51 percent of the state's population. Poor women in Kerala still

live in great hardship. However, elsewhere in India, as in many third world countries, market-oriented development programs have worsened women's conditions. Generally, men work in the cash economy while women produce subsistence crops. When cash cropping is emphasized as a way to increase wealth, men are taught new skills, and women find their status undermined. They may even lose access to land and traditional sources of income. Already existing gender disparities may actually increase.

When female roles are devalued, female infants may be seen as a liability, a drain on precious resources. Female infanticide is one consequence. A declining ratio of females to males is especially strong in the north Indian state of Punjab, which pro-capitalist theorists often cite as a major development success story because of its relatively high income. By contrast, in Kerala there has been an increase in the ratio of females to males. Where there has been a strengthening of bias against females, and public health facilities are limited, families with few resources will seek medical care for boys but not for girls. In Kerala, widely available health care services, and extensive school feeding programs make such a choice unnecessary.

Kerala women have benefited from the expansion of educational opportunities at all levels, and make up over half of the college students. Educated women in Kerala find jobs in teaching, nursing, social work, and related fields. However, many of the poorest women are still agricultural laborers and this is an area of decreasing employment opportunities. Even when there is work in the paddy fields, barefooted women do the most unhealthy labor, at times exposed to the monsoon rains, frequently stooping and bending in water that may contain parasites. At the same time, because women are more likely to be agricultural laborers than men, they are also more likely to benefit from the agricultural laborers' pensions. Specific programs for pregnant* and lactating women have also had a positive impact. In addition, school-feeding programs help to reduce somewhat women's household duties.

Kerala's land reform may have improved the lives of the

highest caste women in Kerala, who traditionally led secluded lives supervising the household servants. In strictly traditional families, only the eldest son could marry, a practice which protected the land from partition but meant that many high-caste women never left their families' homes to start their own families. With the loss of land, high-caste families invested in education for both sons and daughters, and the latter now often work as professionals.

Gender-specific problems are found in Kerala as elsewhere in India. Violence against women is a growing problem throughout the country. Dowry deaths are the most dramatic example of this: "accidents" are arranged for a new bride who does not bring sufficient land, money, or goods to her husband's family. Police do little investigating and courts do not convict. Kerala has been relatively free of such killings which are most common in north India, but news accounts suggest that dowry killing may be increasing.

The entire dowry system is technically illegal in India, but is, in fact, widely practiced. In Kerala, women's associations are attempting to fight this custom. They organize street plays, distribute leaflets, and attempt to force the police and courts to conduct proper investigations of suspicious deaths of females. Another problem that Kerala women share with their counterparts elsewhere is "Eve-teasing," the Indian version of sexual harassment in public places. They may also suffer on-the-job sexual exploitation, or have to deal with unwanted sexual advances from male teachers. Feminists, both inside and outside the left, are beginning to press for meaningful attention to women's issues. Facing women's needs offers both a major challenge and a major new opportunity for Kerala's radical parties.

Unemployment: Kerala's Most Visible Failure

Despite impressive gains in other major areas of life, Kerala suffers from serious unemployment. In 1973, the rate was 25 percent; the official India figure was 8 percent (probably an underestimate). Unemployment in Tamil Nadu state, with the second-highest rate, was 12 percent. The figures for Kerala and India were essentially unchanged in 1988.

Is Kerala's unemployment a consequence of reform? In other words, has a welfare mentality developed, in which people feel no need to work? That might be the case if the unemployment were recent, but Kerala's problem seems to go back at least to the beginning of this century.

Another sign that a welfare mentality might have developed would be a rapidly declining work-participation rate—the percent of the total population who are in the labor force. But, since 1961, that rate has dropped more slowly in Kerala than for India as a whole. However, the figures reflect, in part, the large-scale emigration of Kerala workers. By 1987, over 682,000 people had gone outside the state looking for work, indicating that Keralans seek employment whenever possible, even at the cost of leaving their homes.

Although some analysts claim that high wages are the main cause of Kerala's unemployment, there is no conclusive evidence of this. While, for example, some private entrepreneurs recently have moved cashew processing factories across the state border into neighboring states in search of cheaper labor, most of Kerala's unemployment significantly predates the union-won wage increases of recent years, and thus appears attributable to longer-term factors in the state's economic structure.

Kerala's reforms soften the consequences of underemployment. First, higher wages cushion workers for the periods when they are unemployed. Second, various welfare programs compensate for some lost wages—including unemployment insurance, agricultural laborers' pensions, and a 35-rupee annual school subsidy per child to many former untouchables. Third, rural workers obtain some food security from the house-compound plots they won in the land reform. However, such mechanisms cannot fully offset unemployment. Lack of work means lack of economic opportunity as well as lagging productivity. Unemployment signals wasted human resources, and it is the greatest challenge Kerala's planners and politicians face. The Left Democratic Front government elected in 1987 has proposed programs to stimulate local investment in small-scale, rural industry, but it is too soon to tell whether such programs can effectively raise

employment levels.

Lessons From Kerala

The Kerala model cannot be copied wholesale, but with declining short-term prospects for socialist revolution in the third world, Kerala's workers and peasants have developed important programs that could improve the welfare of the poorest and most oppressed people in many countries. We believe much can be learned from their struggles, accomplishments, and problems. In this spirit, we offer a few tentative lessons from the Kerala experience.

- Radical reforms deliver effective benefits to the poor even when per capita income remains low. The benefits of Kerala's reforms are unmatched in other Indian states or most third world nations. Moreover, the achievements are mutually reinforcing. Land reform, for example, removed the threat of eviction, enabling tenants to increase their participation in politics. Similarly, school lunches help make possible more effective use of affirmative action programs for low caste people whose children can now more easily remain in school.

- Public food distribution is highly effective in very poor agrarian economies. Kerala's school and nursery feeding programs, and especially its comprehensive ration-shop system, ensure a minimum food package to nearly everyone. Low prices help people remain free of the private moneylenders that feed on and reproduce exploitation in much of the third world.

- Devoting resources to public health and health care can lower infant mortality and birth rates and raise life expectancy, even when incomes are low and stagnant. Kerala proves that even in the poorest regions these services need not wait for growth.

- Widespread literacy and education can help break down traditional social barriers and create a more just social order. Although many third world nations recognize the need for education, they devote far too little to either basic literacy or rural programs.

- Land reform can reduce economic and social inequality and put important productive resources into the

hands of the poor. To the extent that wealth and income are derived from land, only breaking the hold of the landed elite can liberate the poorest small farmers.

- Progressives—including communists—can play a major and positive development role. Kerala's major communist party—the CPM—is independent of any other country. Leftists in general have a reputation in Kerala, even among opponents, for being relatively honest. When their candidates win elections, they do not institute undemocratic practices such as censoring the media or repressing opponents.

- Redistribution does not necessarily create employment or raise average income. Kerala's reforms have not raised agricultural production or alleviated unemployment—both chronic problems in many third world economies. The expansion of public service also comes at a price. While redistribution may shift assets of the rich to the poor, everyone does pay for some of Kerala's policies. The per capita tax revenue in Kerala in 1975 was 11 percent of average income, while most Indian states taxed at rates between 6 and 10 percent.

- Radical reform can shield the poor from recessions. In the third world, the effects of the capitalist economic roller coaster have been devastating. Many countries have suffered zero or negative economic growth in the 1980s. A 1988 UNICEF study estimates that the 1980s recession caused 60,000 “extra” child deaths in Brazil alone and over 500,000 extra child deaths worldwide. The estimate does not include war-related deaths.

Certainly recessions hurt Kerala, but land redistribution, food rationing, pensions, and the like partially insulate the poorest from the business cycle. While many third world governments are cutting education and medical services to pay their debts to banks in rich nations, the left coalition government elected in Kerala in 1987 has expanded access to school lunches and pensions. The government also increased per capita education expenditures 16 percent in 1987 and 5 percent in 1988; it raised health expenditures 20 percent in 1987 and 10 percent in 1988. Announcing his agency's 1989 report, UNICEF director James Grant noted:

In the '60s and '70s, tremendous emphasis was put on how you get better GNP growth rates. But GNP growth rates can hide mass maldistribution of income....In the '90s, the target ought to be meeting more tangible human targets: assuring safe water, assuring access to health services, assuring basic education.

Kerala offers lessons in how to hit those targets. It also reminds those on the left, who may be discouraged by recent events, that, to paraphrase Frederick Douglass: without organized radical struggle, there is no genuine progress.

Table 1 Physical Quality of Life Indicators: 1986 Kerala State, All-India, Low-Income Countries, and the United States				
Indicator	Kerala	India	Low-Income Countries	US
Per Capita GNP	\$182	\$290	\$200	\$17,480
Adult Literacy Rate	78 *	43	48	96
Life Expectancy	68	57	52	75
Infant Mortality Rate	27	86	106	10
Birth Rate	22	32	43	16
Population (millions)	27	781	658	242
*1981.				

Table 2 Physical Quality of Life Indicators: 1981-1982 Distribution Across Various Social Groups Kerala State Versus All-India		
Indicator	Kerala	India
Percent Literate (all ages)		
Males	75	47
Females	66	25
Urban	76	57
Rural	69	30
Low Caste	56	21
Tribal Groups	32	16
Life Expectancy in years		
Males	64	57
Females	68	56
Infant Mortality Rate/1,000		
Urban	34	65
Rural	41	124
Birth Rate/1,000		
Urban	23	27
Rural	26	36

Table 3 Rank of Kerala Among India's 22 States in the late 1970s Per Cent of Villages With Selected Infrastructural and Basic Services Within 2 or 5 Kilometers			
Feature	Kerala Rank	%Kerala	%All-India
Within 2 kilometers:			
1. All-Weather Roads	1	98	46
2. Bus Stops	1	98	40
3. Post Offices	1	100	53
4. Primary Schools	1	100	90
5. Secondary Schools	1	99	44
6. Fair Price (Ration) Shops	1	99	35
7. Health Dispensaries	1	91	25
8. Health Centers	1	47	12
Within 5 kilometers:			
9. Higher Ed. Facilities	1	97	21
10. Hospitals	1	78	35
11. Fertilizer Depots	1	93	44
12. Agricultural Pump Repair Shops	1	65	19
13. Veterinary Dispensaries	1	82	45
14. Credit Cooperative Banks	1	96	61
15. Other Banks	1	96	40
16. Seed Stores	2	63	40
17. Storage and Warehouses	4	34	21
18. Railway Stations	8	23	18
In the Village:			
19. Drinking Water	5	96	93
20. Electricity	3	97	33
21. Per Capita Income (GNP:1980-1981)	7	Rs 1421	Rs 1559

Table 4
Health Facilities in Kerala and India: 1979-1980

Facility	Kerala	India
Hospital beds per 100,000		
Urban	458	263
Rural	107	12
Average area served per health center in square kms.		
Primary Center	232	563
Health Center	79	108
Family Welfare	29	149
Persons per		
Doctor	2,385	2,674
Nurse	2,538	4,774
Midwife	3,068	4,947

South Asia Bulletin

Founded in 1981 by the editors as a semi-annual inter-disciplinary journal in the social sciences focusing on social, economic, and political issues affecting South Asia and the Third World. (Editors: VASANT KAIWAR and SUCHETA MAZUMDAR)

... *A major contribution to South Asian Studies* ...

(S. Arasaratnam, President, South Asia Studies Association, Australia)

... *[South Asia] Bulletin is excellent, and needed in the grim political situation* ...

(Martin Bernal, Department of Government, Cornell University)

... *A unique, invaluable, scholarly contribution to the field of South Asian studies and more generally to our international and global understanding* ...

(Douglas Allen, Department of Philosophy, University of Maine)

Available Now:

Volume 9 number 2 -- *The Civil War in Sri Lanka; Racism and the Writing of History; Women in the Dalit Movement*

Forthcoming in 1990:

Volume 10 number 1 -- *Critical Perspectives on Development; Press-State Relations; the Working Class in South Asia; Caste and the Early Labor Movement*

Volume 10 number 2 -- *Women and Identity Politics; Communalism and Politics in South Asia; Economy and Society in Sri Lanka*; plus reviews, documents, etc.

Send for a complete list of back issues.

Subscription: Individuals: (US \$) 1 year -- 15.00; 2 years -- 25.00

Institutions: (US \$) 1 year -- 25.00; 2 years -- 45.00

Order from: South Asia Bulletin, Dept of History,
State University of New York, Albany,
Albany, NY 12222, USA.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

FOUR COMMENTS ON KERALA

I. MARIA HELENA MOREIRA ALVES

For many years now, people in the third world have been rejecting the modernizing theory of development. From the perspective of the third world, one must first ask: development from what, for what, and for whom? The answers to these questions determine whether or not “development” can be translated into improvements in the general living conditions of the people. The model described in Kerala clearly indicates an early choice: rather than providing tax breaks and incentives for private internal and external investments in infrastructure and industry, the government chose to apply most of its resources and efforts to altering dramatically the distribution of wealth as well as generally improving basic services. This choice, in itself, is not a new experience for socialist-inspired governments. It clearly was also the choice, for example, in Cuba, which achieved similarly impressive results in decreasing the infant mortality rate and increasing literacy and access to housing, health care, and education. Most third world socialists would agree that the first step to development is the dramatic improvement of government services meant to fulfill the basic needs of the population. In underdeveloped and poverty-stricken conditions, the efficient and egalitarian distribution of food, housing, health services, and education is an enormously important effort to which most government resources must be allocated.

Maria Helena Moreira Alves teaches political science at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro and, currently, at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. She is one of the founders of the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*. Her essay “The Workers’ Party of Brazil: Building Struggle from the Grassroots” appears in the new anthology *The Future of Socialism*, edited by William K. Tabb (Monthly Review Press, 1990).

There is a second aspect of the Kerala experience which should be emphasized: the widespread and active participation of the citizenry in the making of governmental policy and in the implementation of programs. Citizens participate at every level, through their representative organizations and political parties, in crucial decisions as to priorities and the budget. Their participation as critics and dissenters, making them individually responsive to failures in the system, is perhaps as valuable as their representation in policy-making. An active, informed, educated, and critical population is, perhaps, the most important element in the successful continuation of radical programs of social and political transformation. How to institutionalize mechanisms that encourage this activism and dissent is one of the concerns of contemporary socialist democratic parties in the third world—such as my own political party in Brazil, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores*. The participation and watchfulness of citizens is necessary to ensure the continuous improvement of programs that actually deliver to the population. The organization of dissent and protest is also important in keeping bureaucrats responsive and structures dynamic and open to transformations. Socialist development must be democratic, and, as such, it must be a dialectical process, a process capable of changing with the needs of the people who are the primary actors in the creation of socialism as well as its beneficiaries.

Since its founding in 1979, the *Partido dos Trabalhadores* (PT) has won municipal elections in more than thirty major cities in Brazil. In these cities, the PT has implemented some important economic and social programs which are strikingly similar to the Kerala experience described by Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin. The democratization of decision making at the state level is a primary concern of the PT, which organizes *conselhos populares* (popular councils) with budgetary power to work with the municipal administrations which the PT now controls. The concept of building socialism in day-to-day struggles is put into practice in the popular administrations, where the PT has won in local elections for mayor. Democratizing the state means institutionalizing mechanisms of popular participation in the drafting and

implementation of public policy. One such mechanism has been the development of the popular councils which are organized by neighborhood and by issue of concern. The residents of each *bairro* are organized, usually with one representative for each street, to discuss and draft proposals on such questions of immediate relevance to them as paving streets, installing lights, running water, and sewage systems, and building schools, daycare centers, playgrounds, health clinics, etc. The neighborhood residents elect members of each of the committees to form a *conselho popular*. The popular councils draft their own statutes and meet regularly with members of the municipal government to discuss and draft public policies. Budgetary constraints are discussed, priorities established, and the difficulties of implementation of programs are handled together. For the first time in Brazilian history, citizens, especially poor citizens, participate directly in budgetary decisions and policy making in a regular manner. Direct participation results in distinctly different programs to deal with development and social problems.

Perhaps this point can be best illustrated by a brief description of the major programs of Diadema, in the state of Sao Paulo, where the PT has been in power since 1982. Diadema is a consequence of the uneven capitalist development of Brazil. Located in the center of the most industrialized region of Sao Paulo, Diadema is characterized by a high density of national and multinational industrial installations. Thousands of migrant workers arrive each year seeking employment in the industries of the region. When the PT won, for the first time, the election for mayor in 1982, Diadema had a population of more than 800,000 people. It was the third most densely populated area in Brazil. One-third of the population lived in *favelas* (shantytowns) which crawled up the hilltops, disorganized and crowded. They had no streets, no sewage system, no water, no electricity, no garbage removal services. Diadema had one of the highest infant mortality rates in the country (160 per thousand live births) and an illiteracy rate estimated at 67 percent. The city had no public hospital and only one public health clinic. Transportation, in the hands of private companies, cost almost one-

third of an average paycheck. Hunger and malnutrition aggravated the precarious health of the population.

The PT's administration began meeting with residents in each *bairro* to discuss their problems and draft possible solutions. Residents participated actively in all the steps of policy-making, implementation, and evaluation of programs.

With the encouragement of the administration, the citizens of the different *favelas* organized themselves, conducted a complete census, collectively discussed the urban renewal plan, including the location of streets, health care centers, playgrounds, schools, and child care centers. The residents collectively did the actual dismantling of shacks, opening of streets, and rebuilding of housing, with the constant assistance of government technicians. By 1988, at the end of the PT's first administration, 89 of Diadema's 100 different *favelas* had sewage facilities, garbage removal, water, and electricity. Members of the *favela* councils also helped to draft a law which gave them collective ownership of the land on which the *favelas* were built.

Public transportation in Diadema offers an interesting example of the democratization of public service. Transportation in the city was privately owned, expensive, and inefficient. A citizen's committee on transportation worked with the administration to overhaul the rate system. First, a tripartite committee of business owners, government technicians, and representatives of the citizen's transportation committee reached agreement pinning prices to kilometer/passenger costs of operation. This system became a model for other municipalities, even those not run by the PT. In Diadema, the citizen's committee went further, and the Mayor followed its suggestion that the city take over the transportation companies, to be run jointly by management and workers. The board of directors of the new Municipal Transport Company is to be elected by direct popular vote. Participation of employees in decision-making and the institutionalization of mechanisms for direct administration are the cornerstones of the program.

Because limited availability of land hampered the provision of adequate nutrition, the popular councils par-

ticipated in drafting and implementing a land-use plan through which municipally-owned land not earmarked for other projects were put to use in a citizen-controlled collective agriculture project adapted to the urban setting. Vacant lots were legally taken by the municipal government and added to the agricultural program. Owners of idle land were offered tax incentives to allow their plots to be used for food production. Public parks, roadside land, and school yards were also planted with fruits and vegetables. A school lunch program, supplemented by the food produced locally, was able to provide 50,000 children with two daily meals by 1988.

Unlike the government in Kerala, the PT's local governments are unable to affect the structure of income distribution. Laws regulating land tenure and corporate ownership, for example, are federal. A modification of the basic economic structures which cause the inequality in Brazil requires a national movement to gain control of congress and the presidency. Even taking into account these limitations, the experiences of the local governments under the popular administrations of the PT show that the basic needs can be met through programs which dramatically improve the living conditions of the poorest sectors of the population. More important, perhaps, the experiences have shown that direct involvement of the population in the making and implementation of public policy is a key ingredient in the empowerment process—a necessary basis for democratic socialism.

II. SAMIR AMIN

The achievements of the progressive government of Kerala are beautifully presented in this essay. These facts prove that it is incorrect to think that nothing can be done until the revolution, and that until then "the worst is the best."

Samir Amin is currently the director of the Africa Office, Third World Forum, Dakar, Senegal. He is the author of many books, including *Eurocentrism* (Monthly Review Press, 1989). His essay "Social Movements in the Periphery: An End to National Liberation?" appears in *Transforming the Revolution: Social Movements and the World-System* by Samir Amin, Giovanni Arrighi, Andre Gunder Frank, and Immanuel Wallerstein (Monthly Review Press, 1990).

On the contrary, there is room for progressive reforms, which better prepare going further, but only to some extent—which therefore has to be spelled out—and only in some circumstances—which have to be identified, in order not to believe naively that it can be done anywhere if only there is the “will” to do so. What the CPM has done in Kerala is certainly the best that could be done in the circumstances. All my sympathy goes to them, as well as to Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin, whose positive attitude I fully endorse and share. I believe that Kerala’s achievements are the best way to prepare for the next stage, if only because they result in strong popular organizations, and give reasons for hope, and something to guard.

The reforms achieved in Kerala are basically land reform and a social system which provides fairly good basic services to the popular classes. It is, therefore, in itself a policy of redistribution of wealth and income. What did this redistribution achieve? What are its historical limits, its problems, and its future prospects?

The constitution of India laid down the conditions for the land reform, for instance, the high compensations paid to the landowners. Yet, in spite of this extra cost, the operation is a major success politically, socially, and even on economic grounds. The reform has established the predominance of small farming. But, the historical experience shows that under the conditions of third world countries (and, perhaps, elsewhere) small farming can be the most efficient and most appropriate politically. Large-scale farming, whether capitalist, state, or co-operative is not necessarily more efficient. The authors note that agricultural production has been stagnating in Kerala. Is it because of the pattern of small farming? Some would compare the results of Kerala with the growth achieved in Punjab (the “green revolution”) based on deepening social inequalities, and conclude that, indeed, the alternative is growth *or* redistribution, since they speak in either/or alternatives. In fact, the stagnation of agriculture in Kerala is to be explained by a totally different set of causes. Small farming can be very efficient if it gets appropriate credit at prices which remain in correct relation to the prices of outputs. This is not the case with respect to agriculture in the

third world countries operating within the framework of the so-called world price rationality. This system imposes upon the farmer relatively high industrial prices, while agricultural products are undervalued, and the high subsidy policies of the United States and the European Economic Community to their own farmers make the situation worse. Therefore, only the big, capitalist landowners can compensate for this disadvantage through exploitation of dependent labor. The central government in India provides such "incentives" to the Punjab agrarian bourgeoisie (for obvious political reasons), with the support of western agencies; it does not similarly support the agrarian land reform policy in Kerala (for the same political reasons). Kerala's case cannot be isolated from India's political economy. India's federal budget is decisive, while state budgets remain subsidiary; the central government decides alone on all major legislation and issues. The land reform in Kerala is prisoner of these circumstances; Kerala's government has no say on the major issues governing the relative price/income structure dictated by Indian and international capitalism. To overcome this situation requires making decisions on these issues at a much higher level.

The social services issue is straightforward. From any point of view, what Kerala's government has achieved is fully positive. But the limits are obvious: this redistribution policy is paid for by the people of Kerala, and, therefore, further progress in providing these services depends on further growth.

The issue of unemployment reveals better than any other the limits of what can be achieved within the framework of capitalist India. Relatively high levels of unemployment in Kerala are certainly not due to the policies of the local state. High levels of rural population density are an historical heritage with major responsibility for the unemployment problem. In these circumstances, I believe, the choice of the opposite policy—growth with inequality instead of land reform, which binds more peasants to their villages—would lead to higher levels of unemployment. I believe the Indian ruling class understands this, and possibly for that reason has accepted the land reform in Kerala. Yet, the government of

Kerala can do little about this problem: more opportunities for employment call for industrialization, which is limited by India's capitalist choices and strategies.

At some point, the very achievements of the people and government of Kerala will call for further steps. Have we reached this point? I shall not substitute an answer of mine, which would not be based on full knowledge of the situation, for the much better informed answer of the comrades of Kerala and India. I shall, instead, indicate the two general principles on which the strategy for further progress should, in my opinion, be based.

The first point is delinking from the rationale of global and Indian capitalism. Going further requires industrialization, but not any kind of industrialization, and certainly neither the one based on "international competitiveness" (that is, promoting exports through low costs of local labor) nor "import substitution" (promoting production for the consumption of the privileged local classes). What is needed at this stage are industries which would support a leap forward in agriculture, i.e., supplying inputs and popular consumer goods (these have no market now, but would find their market if agriculture grows, thereby increasing the incomes of the rural masses). Obviously, such an alternative implies a particular structure of relative prices (for the inputs, the agricultural outputs, the popular consumer goods) related to the desired distribution of incomes (as equal as possible, ensuring basic equality between peasants and workers, who represent the fundamental forces in the ruling popular alliance). Needless to say, this structure is not the one which today constitutes the framework for "rational choices" made in the capitalist Indian and global system. Going further to ensure growth *with* social justice, a pattern of growth which immediately benefits the popular masses, is what I mean here by delinking.

Whether such a step forward should be considered within the reach of Kerala's government or postponed until popular struggles have put it on the agenda for all India is a matter I shall leave to the comrades from Kerala and India.

The second point is maintaining and furthering democracy. History has shown that trying to go "fast," irrespec-

tive of people's consciousness and wishes, is self-defeating. Therefore, the question of the forms of property needed to implement successfully a policy going further than mere redistribution should also be dealt with on the basis of democracy. This means a practice of democracy which aims to be the basis for socially progressive change (and I believe that this would lead gradually, if slowly, to socialism), as opposed to the bourgeois concept of democracy as a means to stabilize the reproduction of capitalist exploitation.

One final question cannot be escaped: why have India's central government and imperialism tolerated the progressive achievements of Kerala? The usual answer is that democratic India respects the electoral results in its component states. This is, of course, a superficial answer. The Indian democracy is the means to stabilize the country and guarantee the smooth reproduction of its capitalist system, in spite of the variety of its local components. India's bourgeoisie and its allies are compelled to respect, to a certain degree, differences in local policies; the alternative is the break-up of the federation. The Indian constitution guarantees that these differences will not menace the overall rule of capital.

The U.S. government is also compelled to refrain from direct intervention, operating only through its ally, but not a lackey, the Indian bourgeoisie. This is surely not the case elsewhere, particularly in Latin America, in Africa, and in the Middle East, where the U.S. government claims "strategic" interests. After all, the Sandinistas and others in Central America do not aim at much more than what has been tolerated in Kerala.

There are those who think that achievements such as those of Kerala are possible elsewhere. Many of them are honest, but I think they are wrong. Kerala's achievements were not offered to the people by the good will of foreign agencies or sensible local politicians. They were the result of a class struggle, led by a communist party, against local reactionary forces. The ruling establishments of imperialist powers will not abandon their reactionary allies, unless they are defeated.

III. PRABHAT PATNAIK

Kerala's performance in the spheres of literacy, public health, population control, land reforms, and food distribution, is remarkably impressive, and has been made possible largely because of the strength of the communist-led radical mass organizations in the state. But, if socialism in one country has its problems, then so too does redistributivism in one province of one country, especially a country developing along capitalist lines.

The most obvious problem is the virtual stagnation of output in per capita terms in the basic commodity producing sectors, agriculture and industry, over the last two decades. This has left Kerala's unemployment rate high. The accretion of incomes owing to remittances from the large number of Keralites who migrated to the Gulf provided a degree of relief to some of the state's population, but remittances which were already dropping from their peak level (estimated to be as high as 10 billion rupees, or \$600 million annually) by the late 1980s, are likely to decrease sharply in the wake of the latest crisis in the Middle East. The reverse migration, which had already started, has increased dramatically because of this crisis, which will add to the unemployment problem precisely when the relief of remittance inflows is virtually drying up.

At first sight, it may appear strange that high unemployment rates persisted in Kerala despite the large remittance inflows. But, Kerala is not a closed economy. The expenditure stimulated by the remittances could not have its demand generating effects confined to Kerala alone. A good deal of it leaked out to neighboring Tamil Nadu, where wages were low and production centers already existed. A large amount of construction material, for instance, was imported into Kerala from Tamil Nadu to meet the requirements of the construction boom unleashed by the remittance inflows. Even the savings generated from the remittances could not be kept

Prabhat Patnaik, currently a visiting professor at the School of Oriental and African Studies at the University of London, is writing a book on imperialism.

within Kerala and utilized for stimulating higher investment; financial companies from outside the state moved in to soak up the savings and to channel them into all kinds of business activities over a wider geographical area, so that Kerala's benefits remained limited. While the remittances thus did provide valuable support to large sections of Kerala's population, they did not, through their linkage effects, make much of a dent in the state's problems of stagnation and unemployment, an inevitable result, given the open frontier.

In certain ways, the remittances even had an adverse effect. The construction boom entailed a diversion of agricultural land to housing. Kerala's land area being limited, this was a constraint on the growth of the total area under cultivation in the state. There were other constraints as well. As a paradoxical result of land reform legislation which limits leasing out land, absentee land holders prefer to leave their lands fallow. With the growth in land productivity rather limited, the constraints on the growth of the area under cultivation have kept per capita agricultural output virtually stagnant. This, together with the shift of paddy lands to perennial cash crops, which, though much less labor intensive, were more profitable at a certain time, restricted the growth of employment within agriculture. The government has already taken steps to check further diversion of paddy lands to perennial cash crops like coconut, but the diversion that has already occurred cannot be undone.

In short, Kerala, being merely one of the states of the Indian Union, is linked to the national market and the national economy. It cannot pursue a policy of import substitution. Inviting pan-Indian capital to set up production units in the state for meeting the national market offers little promise. All states are vying with one another, and they are doing so at a time when (official national figures notwithstanding) there is no great industrial boom occurring in the country. In addition, neighboring Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have important industrial centers, where capital is more likely to flow than Kerala, more distant and less industrially developed. And the very fact of Kerala's strong labor organizations and the resulting higher wages is likely to put off capitalists who can

pick and choose between locations.

An effort on the part of the state government to step up its investment would certainly help, but its resources are severely constrained. Under India's constitution, while state governments have been assigned several responsibilities, the major taxation powers are with the central government. Revenues at the center are then shared with the states through three channels: awards from the Finance Commission, which is set up as an adjudicating body once every five years; assistance from the Planning Commission, which is set up entirely by the central government; and a variety of transfers at the discretion of the central government. Over the years, there has been an increase both in the centralization of financial resources and in the role of central government discretion in sharing them with the states. When the central government itself faces a financial crisis (as in recent years), it stints even more in sharing resources with the states, particularly so *vis a vis* states ruled by opposition parties. Even though Kerala's own record in raising tax-revenue has been better than that of most states, it has been facing an acute financial crunch as a result of declining resource devolution from the central government. In other words, Kerala can not escape the burden of the fiscal crisis of the Indian bourgeois state, and is, in fact, particularly affected by it.

Kerala is thus not insulated from the overall trajectory of national development. Precisely because this overall trajectory of capitalist development is not jeopardized by the redistributive policies within Kerala, the state has been allowed the space to carry out these policies without suppression from imperialism or the Indian state (although the latter did dismiss the first elected communist government of Kerala under pressure from the landlords and the church in order to prevent its agrarian and educational reforms). By the same token, however, Kerala has had to operate within the confines of this overall trajectory and face the consequences of the contradictions arising out of it. For instance, the central government is currently negotiating a loan with the International Monetary Fund; Kerala, too, will have to adjust to whatever conditionalities the Fund imposes on India as part

of the loan package.

This is not, by any means, to belittle the tremendous achievements of Kerala, or make out a case that the radical governments in Kerala should have followed some "growth oriented" policy instead of the redistributive plan it adopted, but rather to underscore the limitations which are placed upon redistributive policies by the national economy.

The case of Kerala, while showing what can be achieved through radical mass mobilization by communists and other progressive forces, simultaneously underscores the need for a social transformation in the country as a whole, in order to preserve and deepen these achievements where they have occurred, and to replicate them in other parts of the country. Kerala's achievements are, therefore, not a finished product, a goal which has been reached. These achievements must be continuously advanced, both in Kerala itself and in self-conscious, wider mobilization in the country as a whole.

Progress is possible on both counts. In Kerala, untapped possibilities exist for significantly boosting output and employment. What is more, the radical mass organizations, hitherto concerned with redistributive measures, can themselves be part of the expansion of the productive base, through the development of cooperative forms of production. In agriculture, for example, where the existing land reform legislation constrains individuals' leasing-in of land, and has the unwelcome result of land left fallow by absentee landholders, agricultural workers' cooperatives could be formed to lease in land, strengthening the productive base without having to play the game of luring capitalists away from other states.

On the second count, a significant development in recent years has been the Left Democratic Front's open stand against the communal parties. Given Kerala's polyglot nature, with sizeable Muslim and Christian populations as well as Hindus, and given the long history of a see-saw struggle for political hegemony between the CPI-M and the allied left parties on the one hand and the Congress Party and its allied bourgeois parties on the other, a whole range of communal and caste-based parties have mushroomed in Kerala over the

years, and have found it convenient to keep switching their allegiance from one side to the other, strengthening themselves in the process. The Left Democratic Front, led by the CPI-M, took the bold decision in the last Assembly election, not to have any truck with any of these parties, even if it lost the elections, which, as it turns out, it went on to win. This has started a process of de-communalization of Kerala's politics, and has brought the left palpably into the forefront of the fight against communalism all over the country. The possibilities of spreading radical mass mobilization outside of Kerala and West Bengal are crucially dependent on the left confronting the emerging communalist and fundamentalist forces.

To sum up, the success achieved in Kerala, even within an existing order which fosters the development of capitalism in the country as a whole, demonstrates the vacuity of the position which states "revolution or nothing." On the other hand, it should not be assumed that an equilibrium can long exist between a progressive, egalitarian Kerala and a backward, landlord-capitalist dominated India, nor should the long, arduous, and complex task of a revolutionary transformation of Indian society be set aside as if it were somehow a wholly separate question.

IV. CARLOS M. VILAS

From the vantage point of my own experience with processes of radical reform in Central America, I would like to stress two major factors that, as I understand Richard Franke and Barbara Chasin's article, appear to explain the success of the Kerala regime.

First, I want to emphasize democracy, the strength of political institutions and political pluralism. In Kerala, it seems that there has been a basic, perhaps implicit but in any case effective, agreement among the most important social and political forces to observe institutional political rules and

Carlos M. Vilas is Full Professor of Latin American Studies at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, and the author of *The Sandinista Revolution* (Monthly Review Press, 1986).

not to appeal to extra-legal means to prevent political competition and access to government by contending forces. This is particularly important in the case of socially dominant groups, which, at least in the Latin American case, are always ready to kick the table over and throw the chess pieces away. In Kerala, landlords and other related groups managed to oppose social changes in the late 1950s and to appeal to the central government to dismiss communists from the state government, but they did so not through military or direct actions, but by appealing to already existing institutional procedures. In the same way, a progressive coalition was able, later on, to reintroduce agrarian reform and other reforms, without having to face the political destabilization that is traditional in other third world regions.

Political stability and this apparently shared commitment to institutional rules might seem to some observers a legacy of colonial rule. It might be. But as relevant as former colonial institutions to the forging of the present political culture is Kerala's history of working class organization and progressive politics. In contrast with many underdeveloped countries, Kerala enjoyed a politically experienced working class and popular sectors. According to Franke and Chasin, this working class had already achieved relatively high levels of organization and political culture, which is not the case in the vast majority of African or Central American countries. In the latter, social revolutions are the environment which sets forth the conditions for the masses to advance cultural and organizational maturity, more than it is the product of their already achieved political development. Social classes elsewhere in the third world are weak, and so are political institutions, but this is not the landscape which emerges in Franke and Chasin's description of Kerala.

Second, and directly linked to the previous point, it is clear that Kerala not being an independent state or country but part of the Indian state has acted as a political umbrella, or mediating force, between Kerala and the international system and the other Indian states. While not free of the impact of external pressures, the left in Kerala has not been forced to handle directly the difficult issues of international

economic and political relations: trade, debt, politico-military pressures from the U.S. government, and so on. In addition, as part of a larger political entity, Kerala has been able to reduce some social tensions that tend to define political tensions. Such is the case of the migration of the labor force to other regions in India. According to Franke and Chasin, by 1987, over 682,000 people had migrated outside the state looking for jobs. This figure amounts to 25 percent of Kerala's total population, much more if we take the labor force strictly defined. This, of course, suggests that something is not working well in Kerala's policies and strategy of social and economic development, but it also points to the way in which its status as an Indian state provides a safety valve. In Central America, this valve is provided by illegal migration to the United States, but the very illegality of the migration and its international character reduce the scope and stability of its functioning.

I guess that it would be also fair to suggest that Kerala's status as an Indian state contributes to the development of Kerala's social programs and Kerala's access to external, namely, capitalist, cooperation. These are just hunches, but Franke and Chasin's article does not provide alternative ways to figure where the resources to fund these programs come from, and the reference to CARE involvement in food programs is explicit. This external cooperation seems to have been of strategic importance in the absence of increases in labor productivity in rural production.

A more systematic comparison between this experience of radical change in one *province* and revolutionary processes of change in third world *countries* might help evaluate the accomplishments and the limits of each.

CRISIS IN THE GULF, a 36-page pamphlet from the Institute for Policy Studies, provides a great deal of useful information and a call to action.

For more information contact:

The Institute for Policy Studies

1601 Connecticut Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20009

Telephone: 202-234-9382

REMAKING AMERICAN MARXISM

By MANNING MARABLE

A new political orthodoxy now unites American liberals and conservatives alike: the Cold War is over, the century-long conflict between capitalism and socialism has finally ended, with capitalism triumphant. The death of both Marxism specifically and socialism in general are now widely taken for granted. The proof of this, one African socialist theorist recently observed, is the example of the Berlin Wall. "The fact that pieces of the wall were sold rather than distributed freely," Wamba-dia-Wamba observed, "underlines the reality that capitalism has won."

The apologists for capitalism now argue that the collapse of the Soviet socialist model was inevitable on economic, political, and even moral grounds. They argue that freedom in the political sphere, the unfettered competition between parties in an electoral system governed by laws, is directly dependent on a market-driven economic system, or free enterprise. Such views are now advocated by many of the new political forces in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Earlier this year, an economist elected to the Leningrad city council declared that his country must move quickly "from Marxism-Leninism, through socialism, to Reaganism."

These recent political upheavals have provoked sharp debate throughout the international left. The current debate

Manning Marable is currently a Professor of Political Science, History, and Sociology, and affiliated with the Center for Studies of Ethnicity and Race in America, at the University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado. He has just completed a political biography of Malcolm X, to be published in 1991, and is the author of *African and Caribbean Politics* (London: Verso, 1987) and *W.E.B. Du Bois* (Boston: Twayne, 1986).

over perestroika which appears to be developing within the Communist Party U.S.A. has erupted with much greater intensity in other left parties. The majority of the largest bloc within the British Communist Party has effectively disintegrated. Other parties have questioned their political ideology and in some instances have moved to rename themselves, identifying with the concept "democratic socialism."

Within the United States, the collapse of the Soviet socialist model in Eastern Europe, combined with the unexpected defeat of the Sandinistas in the 1990 election in Nicaragua, has created an unmistakable climate of self-doubt, disillusionment, and even defection from the left. A small number of former leftists are saying that capitalism has been proven correct by historical events, that socialism was an illusion or a fraud. But the vast majority of these leftists have not capitulated to Milton Friedman and Ronald Reagan. Instead, some are taking refuge in what can be described as pre-Marxian forms of socialism. They say that classical Marxian theories, the labor theory of value and dialectical materialism, are no longer valid. In a manner reminiscent of the Frankfurt School Marxists of the 1930s, those theorists whose search for a humanistic socialism in the face of Stalinism led backward to Hegel and Kant, or to the writings of the young Marx, they are resuscitating versions of utopian Marxism as "post-Marxism" or "post-modern socialism."

Others have moved away from identification with the very concept of socialism. Some argue that this is a tactical necessity, particularly within the United States, which has a political culture which is profoundly individualistic, entrepreneurial, and influenced by anti-socialist discourse. Because of McCarthyism and anti-Sovietism, the argument goes, we need to advocate socialist objectives without actually calling ourselves who we really are.

A more sophisticated version of this position is what might be termed "radical democratic" theory, best represented by the work of theorists Samuel Bowles and Herbert Gintis. They argue that Marxism neglects many non-class forms of oppression, that "socialism" as a political term does not embrace the complexity of the goals they project for

democratic change, and that liberal capitalism can be gradually transformed into a version of economic democracy, or a “post-liberal society.” The problem with many of these formulations is that they obscure the fundamental factor which creates and recreates new economic and social contradictions within any capitalist society. That primary factor, which prefigures all others in the first instance, which sees the range of possibilities and outcomes, is the class contradiction. All capitalist market political economies have certain common characteristics: great concentrations of power in the hands of corporate minorities, great stratifications of poverty and wealth, the utilization of racism, sexism, and other factors to segment and divide working people.

Liberalism, by whatever name, seeks to humanize an inherently irrational, wasteful, and inhumane social system. It tries to reduce, but not eradicate, great concentrations of poverty and homelessness. Liberalism attempts to bring representatives of women and people of color into positions of representation, but it does not speak to the transfer of power to oppressed social classes victimized by capitalism. Liberalism wants to interpret the problems of the world, and to create an environment of greater fairness; but the point is not to interpret, but to change the world. In this post-modern period it is no longer popular to relate the truth, the reality that capitalism is “class struggle.” It always has been, and so long as corporate capitalism dominates our economic and social system, it always must be. Our challenge is not to liberalize the existing system, but to transform it radically, building a democratic and humane society.

The dynamic and unprecedented changes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe must be understood against the problematic of revolution in the twentieth century. Since the 1960s, there have been a series of political mobilizations against capital, which have assumed many different forms—such as the 1968 urban revolts in France, national liberation struggles in Latin America and Africa, and the Black liberation movement within the United States. All of these movements were either negated or accommodated with the interests of capital. Many of these failed social struggles were

perceived as efforts to revitalize the political strategy of Marxism-Leninism.

We have to recognize the fundamental problems created by the transformation of the Soviet Union toward a market economy. It means rethinking everything we have assumed about the bipolar character of international relations and the basic forces within the political economy of capitalism. Within the Soviet Union, only two outcomes now seem probable—either the victory of a regulated market economy with the state in control of the commanding heights, dominated by a social democratic-styled Communist Party, which is essentially represented by Gorbachev; or a much more decentralized liberal capitalist social formation, with a disintegrated Communist Party, and with comparatively few restrictions on private capital, which is the model which appears to be developing behind Yeltsin. But, even in the first scenario, the international implications of this rapid restructuring of the state socialist system have meant the repudiation of the theory that class struggle determines international relations. Gorbachev's adviser Yakolev has said as much. The shift by the USSR away from the theory of socialist orientation, or the non-capitalist path in third world revolutions, the insistence that the third world must come to terms with imperialism, and that armed struggle is a historical relic, represents a challenge to non-European, anti-capitalist formations throughout the globe. The Soviet Union's support for the strangulation of Iraq, its eager desire to develop closer ties with Israel, despite the continued struggles of the *intifada*, its notification to Cuba that it must pay in hard currency and at world prices for materials, are all indications that anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist forces will be at a serious disadvantage. The entire politics of non-alignment, as envisioned nearly half a century ago by Nehru, Nkrumah, and Nasser has been rendered obsolete by the collapse of the Soviet bloc. Multinational capital will have an easier time exploiting third world countries, demanding non-unionized labor, and higher profit margins.

But the events of the past year indicate that the transition from capitalism to some viable post-capitalist political

economy is far more difficult to achieve than any of the classical theorists of Marxism ever anticipated. The major strategy employed in these revolutions against capital—the establishment of a socialist dictatorship through a single party state, with state ownership of the central means of production—has failed. However, one can make the case that the emergence of Soviet-allied states in Eastern Europe were not revolutionary, but actually pre-empted the possibility of the construction of a genuinely democratic socialist society. Dissatisfaction with the bureaucratic communist regimes was so great among various social classes and political groups that when Gorbachev refused to guarantee the Brezhnev doctrine of military intervention to buttress local political establishments, these authoritarian states crumbled overnight. Working class outrage against bureaucratic privilege was mobilized by sectors of the petty bourgeoisie and consolidated into a reactionary social force capable of taking state power. The calls for freedom and democracy were not linked to empowerment of working people, but rather to the construction of new forms of capitalist privilege. We can see clear evidence of this in Poland, where current projections of unemployment exceed two million by January 1991.

But we have not witnessed the final act of this evolving political drama. Capitalists know that the Eastern European and Soviet working classes will be bitterly disillusioned when they see exactly how market economics really works. In Latin America and Africa, there will be a massive political reaction to the imposition of economic austerity and cutbacks in social expenditures by conservative regimes. New forms of resistance to capital, strikes, labor unrest of all types, are inevitable. Capital's hope is to consolidate political formations and alliances with the most privileged social classes in third world countries, consolidating conservative political formations which will suppress working class dissent. In Eastern Europe, this scenario exploits the revival of reactionary forms of ethnicism, anti-Semitism, and social intolerance, which are utilized to divide workers. In Poland, such an authoritarian role may be played by the darling of the west, Solidarity's Lech Walesa.

The collapse of the Berlin Wall represents an end to a period of political history. But does it also mean the collapse of our theoretical and critical approaches to an understanding of social and political forces which continue to shape the world? In other words, is Marxism, as a method of social analysis, still relevant in addressing political reality. It is a sad measure of these times that the question must even be asked. In New York, more than in any other city in the United States, the contemporary contradictions of capitalism are blatant and self-evident. Conservative estimates place the number of the city's homeless at 85,000, hundreds of thousands lack adequate shelter and employment; several million lack adequate health care and have seen an erosion in their standard of living.

Will class struggle still exist in this post-modern, post-Cold-War period? I would argue that class struggle is still relevant when the top 1 percent of all U.S. income earners receive more than the bottom 40 percent. Each year, families earning more than \$50,000 receive almost \$40 billion in government-sponsored subsidies in the form of mortgage interest exemptions, capital gains deferrals on housing sales, and other tax abatements. Meanwhile, the vast majority of families cannot afford to purchase a home, and in New York City alone there are 170,000 families on the waiting list for public housing. Real unemployment rates for African-Americans, which would include the "discouraged workers" not counted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, exceed 20 percent.

Far from representing a triumph of capitalism, the end of the Cold War reveals more clearly to working people that anti-Communist demagoguery masked the essential class inequities within U.S. society. In the 1980s, real median income of the upper 1 percent doubled, to \$500,000 household income, while the incomes of working people declined. Even Kevin Phillips, the conservative guru, recognizes in his book *The Politics of Rich and Poor* that the United States is on the verge of a major political transformation pitting the rich against middle to low income Americans.

The media have predicted the imminent collapse of the

Soviet Union at least a thousand times in the past two years, and everyone knows that the Soviet Union is experiencing a deep economic and political crisis. But, from a Marxist perspective, we know that the United States is also in crisis. Our crisis can be seen in the statistical realities of growing human suffering and inequality—three million homeless, 38 million without any medical insurance, millions in substandard housing, millions of children denied proper nutrition, millions of middle income families forced to work multiple jobs just to maintain a reasonable standard of living, collapsing bridges and highways due to inadequate support for the infrastructure, millions who are functionally illiterate or unable to work in a computer oriented labor force. This economic, social, and educational crisis reinforces our belief that the socialist alternative continues to be both relevant and politically necessary. Our challenge is to rethink our socialist vision, advancing a political strategy which is more appropriate to the practical problems and realities of this historical conjuncture. But, by remaking our political approach, we must not abrogate or abandon our intellectual and political identity as socialists.

How can we revitalize socialist politics and strategy for the 1990s and beyond? Briefly, I would suggest several points of departure, which should be explored seriously by the U.S. left. First, instead of emphasizing electoral politics above all other political activities, we should refocus our organizing efforts on the practical problems experienced by the vast majority of working people and people of color in the central cities. The basic problematic for political engagement for the early twenty-first century will be: What constitutes an economically productive, socially pluralistic, and democratic urban community? I am not suggesting a hasty updating of Saul Alinsky's community organizing strategy. The current socioeconomic crisis of the cities is qualitatively different from the problems experienced a generation ago. Many basic conflicts with capital no longer occur in the workplace, although struggles against job discrimination and for full employment remain absolutely critical. But most manifestations of oppression occur in what can be termed the "living place," or the

urban, post-industrial community.

Struggles over housing, health care, child care, schools, public transportation, and economic development all revolve around the future of the post-industrial city. The urban poor and working classes, combined with the unemployed, are, in effect, second class citizens, denied access to a quality of life which a minority of white, affluent Americans casually take for granted. Questions over public investment, reindustrialization, and the restriction of the right of capital to move across state and national boundaries, will increasingly impact millions of Americans. The left must be in the forefront in shaping the national agenda in the definition of what constitutes a humane, progressive living place.

Second, we need to think about a socialist politics which has something innovative and creative to say about the environment. There is no coherent Marxist approach to the question of pollution abatement, ozone depletion, or a host of other environmental concerns which will assume increasing significance in the twenty-first century. In the United States, in the wake of Three Mile Island and Chernobyl, most socialists are strongly opposed to the construction of nuclear power plants. But, other Marxists throughout the world have been identified with nuclear energy and other efforts at energy production which have culminated in ecological disasters. There is no identifiably Marxist approach to the issues of agricultural production and food distribution, population growth and reproductive rights, disarmament and economic conversion. It is not enough for us to criticize the policies of Western capitalism, but to develop an environmental politics of the left which addresses the root causes of ecological problems.

Third, U.S. Marxists must seriously rethink their whole approach to electoral politics, and particularly their explicit or implicit faith that the Democratic Party will one day become "humanized," reformed from within, and transformed into a social democratic or anti-capitalist social force. I have recently been criticized, curiously, by both the Communist Party, in the pages of the People's Daily World, and reportedly by members of the Democratic Socialists of America's execu-

tive committee, on this very point. On this issue, the late Michael Harrington and Gus Hall were largely identical. DSA has operated as the extreme left wing of American liberalism, trying to make socialism respectable to Congressional liberal Democrats. Similarly, Communists have consistently supported political liberals, such as Detroit's Mayor Coleman Young, and even post-black candidates like Virginia's Governor Douglas Wilder, whose political agendas are hardly progressive. Both approaches fail to comprehend the class nature of the U.S. electoral system; or, in other words, both DSA and the CPUSA have used non-Marxist approaches to the questions of politics.

The Democratic and Republic parties have maintained a coalition government of national unity for decades, a Likud-Labour style marriage, operating more from consensus than competition. Both national parties now have a vested interest in maintaining this electoral partnership, which is the principal reason that the Democrats have ceased to function as a loyal opposition in anything but name. Many Democrats recognize that they could probably win the presidency by the route advocated by Jesse Jackson—expanding the electoral base to include millions of non-voting Blacks, Latinos, poor, and working-class voters and advancing a U.S version of left social democracy, attacking the power of the corporations. This would force the Democrats into a truly antagonistic relationship with both the Republican Party and virtually all elites in corporate America. It would also require the organizational restructuring of the party, something that its bureaucracy strongly opposes. Most Democratic leaders would rather lose a presidential election and cooperate with a George Bush and Bob Dole than permit radical leaders to emerge within their ranks.

Both parties are dominated by sections of capital, and have a fundamental commitment to private enterprise, regardless of the destructive human consequences for the majority of U.S. working people. Rather than a new deal from a stacked deck, we need a new game altogether.

Black and white progressive activists must revive the traditions and tactics of non-electoral political protest. This

requires new institutions of creative resistance. For example, “freedom schools,” open multi-racial academies held during late afternoons, and on weekends for secondary school and college students, could offer a public protest curriculum. Learning how to organize street demonstrations, selective buying campaigns, civil disobedience, and reading about the personalities and history of American protest, would help to build a radical consciousness among this generation of youth.

Changing the rules requires innovations in the electoral process itself. The traditional plurality system in U.S. elections gives the victory to the candidate with the most votes. This system is not only easily manipulated by corporate interests, which co-opt both major parties and suppress third party efforts, but by its nature manipulates public preferences into predictable outcomes. In multi-candidate, citywide elections, in which minority constituencies represent one-third of the total vote, or less, it becomes virtually impossible to elect candidates who represent their interests. Two results are predictable. Either the turnout rate of Blacks gradually declines in national elections, which has occurred for the past fifteen years, or candidates emerge who are more conservative, thus politically palatable to the white upper middle class and corporate interests. A third, better option would be to restructure voting procedures so minority interests can be expressed democratically.

Civil rights attorneys in several states have successfully pushed for changes in local elections which would give each voter several votes in each multi-candidate race. The votes could be clustered behind one candidate or shared in blocs with coalition partners. The result would be that minorities and working-class constituencies would have a much better opportunity for winning authentic representation in citywide races, yet this system doesn’t discriminate against white majorities. The left has to be in the forefront of campaigns to democratize the electoral process.

Fourth, the U.S. left must rethink its current organizational forms, its political language, its general strategy, and even its historical memory, if it is to remain relevant to the struggles ahead. We must begin by asking ourselves what has

given historical force to the idea of socialism? Why have so many millions of activists fought for this nebulous political concept, which has generated both constructive accomplishments and monumental crimes, and which now for many seems abstract and irrelevant? The expression of any politics presumes a set of values. Beneath the socialist idea are a core of egalitarian and humanistic values: the human right to creative, productive work; the right to accessible and dependable health care; the right to decent housing; the right to public education; freedom from oppression based on race, gender, or ethnicity; the elimination of great concentrations of power and privilege in the hands of a tiny minority; and the democratic empowerment of those who historically have experienced the burden of exploitation and oppression.

The political expression of these values has created a number of political formations. Some who share these values have called themselves communists or Marxist-Leninists; others have joined democratic socialist organizations or labor parties; and still others have belonged to a host of other formations, inspired by the writings and political examples of China's Cultural Revolution, or Leon Trotsky, C.L.R. James, and others.

Once political organizations are created, they generate their own unique internal dynamics, which help to perpetuate the formation and those personalities in leadership positions. To justify their continued existence, formations emphasize their distinct theoretical and programmatic differences with other groups which share their general outlook. This pursuit of political purity fragments the possibility for cooperative relations among groups. The left can not afford this type of destructive sectarianism. The political events which once divided the international working class movement in the early twentieth century are being rapidly superseded. Before the twenty-first century, it will become less important whether one belongs to the Democratic Socialists of America, or the Communist Party, or any other socialist organization, than to grasp and build upon those basic principles which unite us, which give our political practice a creative vision and progressive-orientation, which challenge the capitalist system of power

and privilege in this nation.

We must look forward to a day when there will be a single democratic and pluralist socialist formation in the United States, a national organization with the capacity to influence millions of Americans. It would be based on a common program of Marxist principles and politics, drawing upon the positive elements of both Marxism-Leninism and social democracy. But in the immediate years ahead, diverse elements of the left must engage in intense dialogues, identifying areas of common political concern, and constructing practical unity by joint activities. The U.S. Communist Party has its own unique organizational history and a rich legacy of struggle, particularly with the anti-racist and labor movements. Members of the Democratic Socialists of America, particularly those close to the Democratic Party, would have to overcome years of anti-Soviet and anti-Communist thinking. Both formations would have some difficulties relating to militants who had formerly belonged to the Socialist Workers Party, or to activists who were-part of the new Communist movement of the 1970s. There are ancient, personal animosities and political grievances going back decades between individuals within similar groups, which in some instances will never be bridged. We can only respond to these realities by reminding our comrades of C.L.R. James's observation: "Revenge has no place in politics."

At this preliminary stage, the call for regrouping and rethinking is the recognition that our political conjuncture has been changed fundamentally by recent events; that the old political and organizational categories of the past century no longer adequately reflect these latest trends; and that the dynamics of capitalist exploitation within this country still require the existence of an active, militant, Marxist left. Unity, if it occurs, must evolve dialectically, through the common participation of various groups in political conferences, publications, the construction of institutions and political campaigns. Regrouping also suggests that critical elements of both Marxism-Leninism and social democracy are essential as the basis for the new unity. Marxist-Leninists in America were far more successful than social democrats in building progres-

sive movements among the unemployed and workers in the 1930s and 1940s. They made impressive contributions to the mass democratic struggles against racial segregation. Communists recognized the critical importance of national liberation struggles in Asia, Latin America and Africa, and were crucial in mobilizing Americans against apartheid. But these strengths were undermined by the Marxist-Leninists's tendency to devalue the process of democratic decision making, and to rely on authoritarian methods. The Communist Party not only refused to work cooperatively with others who called themselves Marxists or socialists, but actively attacked them. Conversely, socialists in the Norman Thomas-Michael Harrington tradition had a healthy respect for political pluralism and ideological diversity, and recognized that the vital link between democracy and socialism destroyed by Stalinism was central to their definition of politics. Yet, the social democrats tended to relate to the interests of labor leaders more than the concerns of the rank-and-file, they did little to develop links with people of color domestically, and they did not comprehend the importance of supporting national liberation struggles as part of the larger struggle for socialism. Democratic socialists underestimated the repressive capability and characteristics of the capitalist state. A synthesis of strengths from both political traditions could form the foundations for a far more effective socialist movement, if we agree to enter into a protracted process of practical collaboration and discussion. A theory of revolution which is truly organic and appropriate to the unique conditions of the United States could emerge from this process.

Finally, we must constantly return to the challenges which exist in our society today, and which will exist in the twenty-first century. Does capitalism have the capacity to end racism and sexism, to abolish hunger and illiteracy, to eliminate homelessness and unemployment, to reconcile vast disparities of wealth and income between antagonistic social classes? No way. Unless we consolidate a national formation with sufficient numerical strength in membership and political clout, which openly and unambiguously calls for socialism, we will become increasingly marginalized and isolated from

the broader currents of protest. We must cease looking backward, mired in outdated political feuds and formulations, and grasp the new challenges and opportunities which may exist. We must, in short, dare to have historical imagination, and dare to be Marxists. If we do so, the so-called death of socialism in 1989-1990 will one day transform itself, Phoenix-like, into a new birth.

Subscribe to

MONTHLY REVIEW

- ☐ 1 year \$22 (foreign \$26)
- ☐ 2 years \$38 (foreign \$47)
- ☐ Libraries and Institutions \$42 (foreign \$45)
- ☐ Students and Senior Citizens \$17 (foreign \$19)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Send check or money order to:

MONTHLY REVIEW
122 West 27th Street
New York, NY 10001

(Canadian subscribers must pay the foreign rate)

23

BOOKS

LEARNING FROM LENIN

by Michael Löwy

Lenin and the Revolutionary Party by Paul Le Blanc. Introduction by Ernest Mandel. Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1989. 364 pp. \$60.

There is no lack of books about Lenin, but this is the first attempt at a precise historical reconstruction of his organizational thought: the theory of the revolutionary party, from its origins until the immediate aftermath of the October revolution. Paul Le Blanc has not only an intimate knowledge of Lenin's writings but also an impressive command of the vast literature about his topic. One of the major qualities of this powerful book is its historical approach: Lenin's political/organizational ideas are not treated as disembodied abstractions but constantly confronted with the reality of the labor movement and of the revolutionary process, by drawing on a large range of documents, biographical accounts, and works of scholarly research. The result is a work of unusual strength and coherence, inspired not by academic neutrality but by the deep conviction that there is much to learn from the actual ideas and experiences of Lenin and the revolutionary party he led.

Refusing to consider Lenin's organizational views as if they were a finished and self-contained schema, Le Blanc tries to grasp both the underlying continuity in his perspectives from the 1890s up to 1917 and beyond, and the significant shifts which took place in this thought, flowing from an accumulation of experience. Criticizing the tendency to restrict the Leninist conception of the party to Lenin's writings of 1902-1904 (particularly *What is to be*

Michael Löwy is research director in sociology at The National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) Paris, France, and the author of *The Marxism of Che Guevara* (Monthly Review Press, 1971) and *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development* (London: Verso, 1981).

Done?) he describes six different phases of development from 1900 to 1923:

1. 1900-1904. Lenin and other Marxists struggle to establish the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party (RSDLP) around the revolutionary program and centralized organizational concepts of the newspaper *Iskra*. In the 1903 split, Lenin's Bolshevik faction represents the most consistently centralist and uncompromisingly revolutionary orientation.

2. 1905-1906. The revolutionary upsurge of 1905 catches both factions by surprise. Lenin's centralism is tempered by the understanding that looser and more democratic norms can help root the RSDLP in a dramatically radicalizing working class.

3. 1907-1912. The defeat of the revolutionary wave and a triumphant reaction destroy the RSDLP mass base within Russia. Lenin conducts a bitter war against both liquidators (the most moderate Mensheviks) and abstentionists (Bogdanov and his friends), ending with the exclusion of the latter from his faction and an organizational split with Menshevism, constituting the Bolsheviks as a separate party.

4. 1912-1914. The Bolshevik party outstrips the incohesive remnants of the non-Bolshevik RSDLP.

5. 1914-1917. Confronted with the eruption of the First World War, the Bolsheviks and the minority of Menshevik Internationalists vehemently oppose the Russian war effort and are severely repressed. The pro-war majority of the Mensheviks is able to assume a dominant position in the workers' movement.

6. 1917-1923. Tsarism is overthrown by a spontaneous revolution. In the new and volatile situation, the Bolsheviks become again the strongest force and are able to lead the masses to a socialist revolution. Under the situation of war, civil war, foreign blockades, and interventions the Bolsheviks adopt increasingly restrictive measures, in Russia as a whole and within their own party, while waiting for a revolutionary triumph in the West that will end the desperate isolation of their impoverished country.

From the various historical experiences the essential aspects of Lenin's organizational theory emerge—and they have to be distinguished from particular aspects, corresponding to specific situations. The essential function of the revolutionary party is to raise the general level of the working-class consciousness, and to organize the class struggle of the proletariat for the purpose of winning political power and of replacing capitalist by socialist economy.

While recognizing the existence of internal tensions in the

Bolshevik tradition, Le Blanc rejects the common view—held both by anti-Communists and Stalinists—that Leninism is basically elitist and authoritarian. Attacking cold-war scholarship, he draws on the important contributions of recent historical research (by young scholars like David Mandel, Ronald Suny, Rex Wade) who show that the October revolution, far from being a mere “Bolshevik coup,” was the expression of a genuinely popular movement.

How much changed and how much remained permanent in Lenin’s views on the revolutionary party from the beginning of the century to 1917? According to Le Blanc there is a basic continuity in Lenin’s organizational conceptions between 1900, 1906, 1914, and 1917; authoritarian features appear only after the seizure of power, during the civil war. It seems to me, however, that there is much truth in the critical remarks by Rosa Luxemburg and young Leon Trotsky against the “substitutionist” aspect of Lenin’s pre-1905 views. For instance, Le Blanc considers that the general argument of *What is to be Done?* “despite polemical exaggerations—remains reasonable and valuable for later periods, including our own.” (pp. 62-63) I would say that, in spite of some important insights, this book was basically one-sided (by its emphasis on centralism against democratism) and therefore dangerous for the future. A scrupulous historian, Le Blanc himself quotes a remark by Lenin in 1921, refusing to have this text translated into non-Russian languages “to avoid false application.” He also quotes a criticism by Trotsky (in 1939) of “the biased nature, and therefore the erroneousness” of one of the main ideas of *What is to be Done?*—that socialist consciousness is brought to the proletariat “from the outside.”

I think there are some very basic differences between the “bureaucratic” arguments of Lenin in 1902-1904 and the truly democratic ideas he developed during the 1905 Revolution, as well as between the authoritarian Lenin of 1908-1912 (who required “unanimity” in his faction, and expelled Bogdanov and his comrades) and the “libertarian” Lenin of 1917, who wrote *State and Revolution*, a remarkable piece of semi-anarchism. In other words: it seems to me that the “serious ambiguities and contradictions” which, according to Le Blanc crop up only during Lenin’s final years (1918-1924), have their roots in the pre-1905 and pre-1917 years.

Le Blanc’s chapter on the first years after the October revolution (complemented by a remarkable discussion of the problems involved in the process of bureaucratization by Ernest Mandel in his introduction) is one of the best in the book: he shows both the significant elements of pluralism which were present until 1921, as well as the transformation, during the years, of “disciplined quantity

into authoritarian quality.” While rejecting the conventional wisdom of cold-war scholarship he is very much attentive to “sensitive and honest radical observers” like Bertrand Russell and Alexander Berkman, whose writings “stand as perhaps the most substantial critique of Bolshevism ever written” (I would add Rosa Luxemburg’s 1918 pamphlet *The Russian Revolution*). He stresses, however, that bureaucratization did not result from Lenin’s ideas in 1902 but from desperate objective conditions like poverty, backwardness, isolation, civil war, foreign intervention. This is certainly true, but it seems to me that by offering an exclusively objective explanation, one incurs the danger of a certain fatalism. The example of revolutionary Nicaragua (analyzed by Le Blanc in several remarkable essays) seems—whatever its limitations and contradictions—to indicate that democracy and pluralism can be maintained even under the most severe conditions of civil war and foreign intervention. The process of bureaucratization in the USSR resulted, in my opinion, both from tragic objective circumstances and certain “subjective” factors: the authoritarian and substitutionist components of the pre-1917 Bolshevik tradition, the “organizational fetishism” (see Mandel’s introduction) of the Bolshevik leaders and—last but not least—their lack of awareness (until it was too late) that full democracy—both in the party and in the Soviet institutions—was the only way to prevent bureaucratic degeneration.

In his conclusion, Le Blanc presents a brief and cogent summary of the Leninist vision: the vanguard party as a determined, principled—but also open and evolving—group of revolutionaries, with a variety of critical minded individuals who are committed to working together for a common goal, through a collectively (democratically) directed effort. Such an understanding of Leninism excludes any “uncritical adulation of Lenin and his ideas,” (p. 360) and must integrate the important insights developed by revolutionary/socialist critics of Bolshevism, from Rosa Luxemburg to our time. Among the recent critiques, Le Blanc singles out, for its significance in identifying genuine problems, the writings of the well known British socialist-feminist historian Sheila Rowbotham. Severely critical of the elitism, hierarchy, and bureaucratism which she attributes to Leninism, Rowbotham looks for a non-authoritarian approach to socialist organization, based on “a recognition of creativity in diversity”; she believes, however, that Leninism is “a passionate and complex cultural tradition of revolutionary theory and practice on which we must certainly draw.”

Paul Le Blanc’s book is a powerful and stimulating contribution to the knowledge and revival of this cultural tradition.

DOING WELL BY DOING GOOD

by W.H. Locke Anderson

Charity Begins at Home: Generosity and Self-Interest Among the Philanthropic Elite by Teresa Odendahl. New York: Basic Books, 1990. 299 pp. \$22.95.

Anyone who kept a sense of humor during the budget fiasco in Washington in the fall of 1990 could see that while the ship of state still sails under bourgeois registry, various ruling-class fractions are wrestling with one another for the helm and the vessel periodically heads for the reefs. The only genuine solution to the perennial revenue crisis—to reverse the deep cuts in top-bracket tax rates made during Reagan's presidency—has no support from any major voice in Congress or the Administration, and for a while the liveliest discussion was whether and by how much to reduce the tax rate on capital gains. Ultimately, congressional Democrats and liberal Republicans rediscovered the electorate and were forced by their middle-class constituencies to try to preserve some progressivity in the tax schedule. As one observer noted, the only bracket not to have its marginal tax rate increased in the eventual compromise was the one that includes most members of Congress. In light of these shenanigans, the best one can do is laugh, although the farce must seem much funnier to passengers on some other ship.

In one scene, done entirely in deadpan, Senator Moynihan of New York moved in the Senate Finance Committee to permit higher tax deductions for philanthropic gifts of art works and manuscripts donated by people rich enough to have to pay the Alternative Minimum Tax, a provision originally designed to reduce the number of very rich who could otherwise avoid paying taxes altogether

Locke Anderson is Associate Editor of *Monthly Review*. The title of his review is a line from Tom Lehrer's song, "The Old Dope Peddler."

by creatively itemizing their deductions. His proposal was part of the committee's deficit reduction package, mind you; it was incorporated in the bill that eventually became law. The president of New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, William H. Luers, was quick to say of this proposal, "The principal beneficiaries of this will be the American public." (*New York Times*, October 16, 1990, p. 1)

Theresa Odendahl's cogent and well-written book, *Charity Begins at Home*, casts considerable doubt on Luers' statement and deeply undermines the case for allowing high-income recipients to take tax deductions for charitable gifts. As she shows, when the rich give to "charity," they serve their own interests in very direct ways that go well beyond the benefits of legalized tax evasion. This needs to be more widely understood than it is. Ms. Odendahl has documented the self-serving dimensions of charitable donation in a book that focuses on giving by the very rich—the avenues down which their money is directed and the central role of donors in managing the institutions to which they contribute. Its author brings to her task a background that includes both extensive research on the subject and a brief, stormy stint as executive director of a feminist foundation dominated by its principal donor, a daughter of billionaire H.L. Hunt. These credentials have endowed her with a judicious blend of savvy and cynicism.

Soon after her book was published, she summarized its main arguments on the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*.

Consider, for example, the "thousand points of light" President Bush invoked as he accepted his party's nomination in 1988. Mr. Bush named several voluntary organizations, but he failed to refer to even one of the small group of elite nonprofit institutions—Ivy League universities, museums, symphonies, think-tanks, private hospitals, prep schools, and the like—that, by the best available estimates, receive more than two-thirds of private charitable giving.

About half of philanthropy is donated by multimillionaires. Most of this money goes to groups that sustain the culture, education, policy positions, and status of the well-to-do. Rich people, for example, support the "high art" offerings of symphonies and ballets; the hospitals to which they contribute usually are not public facilities, but overwhelmingly private institutions, most of whose patients have insurance. Contrary to popular belief, less than a third of nonprofit organizations serve the needy. In fact, the wealthy end up funding their own interests.

Even more disturbingly, the wealthy also exert control over public funds, and over money contributed in smaller amounts by the less well-off, without the accountability we expect in a government agency or publicly held corporation. Public funds in fact make

up about one-third of the budgets of most tax-exempt organizations. So, in effect, the non-elected wealthy individuals who oversee non-profit organizations hold sway over the disposition of not only their own money but also of tax revenues. ("A Thousand Pointless Lights," August 4, 1990)

This is hornswoggling in the tradition of the great nineteenth-century cardsharps and snake oil peddlers. Although Ms. Odendahl does not say so, the rich may in fact control their favorite "charities" more completely than they do the sources of their own wealth, since capitalist firms are subject to some discipline from their product markets and the possibility of hostile takeover, while the non-profits are disciplined only by the pressure of fundraising, which is doubtless much easier if an institution is firmly in the hands of "respectable" and "public spirited" elements of the ruling class. Much of the direct control is provided by the major contributors themselves, who are the active participants in what she calls "the culture of philanthropy"—the understandings, schemes, practices, and ceremonies that govern the donation of wealth to the causes of the wealthy and the management of their endowed institutions.

Some of the most interesting material in the book outlines the complex charitable activities of such families as the vastly wealthy Mellons of Pittsburgh. These pages illustrate how they are led to adopt projects that then become focal to the family's giving over a number of generations. The favored institutions are then, in effect, their property, regardless of who holds the juridical title. The National Gallery in Washington, for example, is a central concern of the Mellons, who also have an enduring "interest" in projects in their home city. Like other dynastic funders, they own and control family foundations that act as their agents.

This tendency for wealthy families to control tax-exempt institutions is not unknown even among those whose ruling boards are chosen by the electorate. Although the University of Michigan is a public university, its elected regents are normally prosperous members of the bourgeoisie. (The elected board of Wayne State, a working class university in overwhelmingly black Detroit, is normally made up of less exalted citizens.) The president of University Microfilms, a subsidiary of Xerox, was for a number of terms an elected member of the Board of Regents. He was a large donor to the University, and its Center for Performing Arts is named for his family. When he was forced from office on a conflict-of-interest charge (more formal than real, I think), his daughter-in-law was nominated by the Democrats and elected to replace him. When she leapt to her death from the top of the campus carillon tower, the

governor chose her husband to fill out the rest of her term. The family's name is, fittingly, Power.

The main motive of the ruling class in trying to control the non-profit sector is, presumably, to keep it from exerting an egalitarian influence on a country whose economy is otherwise owned and run directly by the rich. The institutions that comprise the non-profit sector cannot safely be entrusted to the state. From the bourgeoisie's viewpoint, politics are not reliable enough, because control in the political arena—based as it is on coalitions—can rather quickly slide from one part of the ruling class to another, and is not impervious to influences from the subsidiary classes, that is, from the majority of the people.

This is an important book, which should be read by anyone who wants to understand how the U.S. ruling class rules. It is often delightful and never dreary, a book to be read for pleasure as well as edification. Ms. Odendahl treats her subject seriously, as well she should, but cannot successfully conceal her cheerful scorn for the ways of the rich. Consider her sly description of the celebrated Mory's, an institution made mildly famous by a singing group at Yale University, the Whiffenpoofs.

Like many private eating clubs, Mory's is exclusive. People may join if they can afford the fees; are alumni or students of Yale college...[or] other designates of the Yale community. The food is expensive and famously mediocre. It is thought to be an impressive place to bring guests....for a young member of the culture of philanthropy, there is nothing special about Mory's. By the time they get to college, children of the charitable elite are accustomed to bad meals in glorified settings and good food whenever they choose. (p. ix)

By the time they get a little older, of course, the pampered little darlings will also become accustomed to having their senators try to lower their tax "burdens," even in the midst of a revenue crisis.

CRITICAL DECADE

Prospects for Democracy
in the Philippines in the 1990s

Edited by Dolores Flamiano and Donald Goertzen

Papers from the Critical Decade Conference

March 16-18, 1990

University of California at Berkeley

"The section on the special US-Philippine relationship challenges
longheld policy assumptions . . . and asks many sharp questions in
light of emerging world order . . ."

Victor W.C. Hsu

Director, East Asia Office

National Council of the Churches of Christ

"... [T]he most comprehensive analysis to date of the current
Philippine crisis . . ."

Phil Bronstein, Journalist

The San Francisco Examiner

Available from:

The Philippine Resource Center

P.O. Box 40090

Berkeley, CA 94704

(415) 548-2546

\$10 + \$1.50 for postage/handling

THE LATEST FROM

Rethinking MARXISM

a journal of
economics, culture,
and society

Advisory Board

Michèle Barrett
Rosalyn Baxandall
Joseph Buttigieg
Johnnetta Cole
Carmen Diana Deere
Terry Eagleton
Stephen Jay Gould
Fredric Jameson
Ernesto Laclau
Dominique Lecourt
Rayna Rapp
Stephen Resnick
Sheila Rowbotham
Gayatri Chakravorty
Spivak
Cornel West
Richard Wolff
Harold Wolpe

MARXISM NOW:

TRADITIONS AND DIFFERENCE

Papers from the historic international conference
held 30 November-2 December 1989

Fall/Winter 1990 (Volume 3, Numbers 3 & 4)
Special Double Issue

CONTENTS INCLUDE

Manning Marable, *Socialist Vision and Political
Struggle for the 1990s*

Carole Biewener, *Loss of a Socialist Vision in
France*

Samuel Bowles & Herbert Gintis, *Rethinking
Marxism from a Radical Democratic Perspective*

Ann Ferguson, *Sex/Affective Labor and Racial
Formations*

James Petras & Morris Morley, *U.S. Foreign
Policy: Sacrificing Dictators to Save the State*

Satyananda Gabriel, *Overdetermination and the
Continuing Significance of Race*

Amitava Kumar, *Towards Postmodern Marxist
Theory*

Ellen Rooney, *Marks of Gender*

Neil Lazarus, *Imperialism, Cultural Theory and
Radical Intellectualism Today*

Tony Smith, *The Critique of Marxism in
Baudrillard*

and much, much more

Subscription rates: individuals \$24/1 year,
\$45/2 years; students \$18/1 year; institutions
\$50/1 year, \$90/2 years

Send subscription (indicate starting issue)
and check to *Rethinking* MARXISM,
P.O. Box 85, Newton Centre, MA 02159

EASTERN EUROPE

1991

FOLLOWING THE SUCCESS OF OUR 1990 TRIP, PREPARATIONS ARE NOW UNDER WAY FOR A SECOND MONTHLY REVIEW TOUR OF EASTERN EUROPE FROM JUNE 13 - JULY 4, 1991. THE TRIP WILL TAKE YOU ON A FASCINATING AND EDUCATIONAL TOUR THROUGH:

- ☐ **GERMANY**
- ☐ **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**
- ☐ **HUNGARY**
- ☐ **POLAND**

YOU WILL MEET WITH LOCAL POLITICAL, ACADEMIC, AND TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES AS WELL AS EXPERIENCE THE RICH CULTURE THESE COUNTRIES HAVE TO OFFER.

THE PRICE OF \$4,100, INCLUDES A \$300 TAX DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO THE MONTHLY REVIEW FOUNDATION

AND:

- ☐ **TRANS-ATLANTIC FLIGHTS**
- ☐ **FIRST-CLASS HOTELS**
- ☐ **BREAKFAST & DINNER DAILY**
- ☐ **MEETINGS & SIGHTSEEING IN EACH CITY**
- ☐ **BUS TRANSPORTATION BETWEEN CITIES**
- ☐ **TOUR LEADER & LOCAL GUIDES**
- ☐ **SERVICE CHARGES & LUGGAGE HANDLING**

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT SARAH LAMPITT AT
MONTHLY REVIEW, 122 WEST 27TH STREET
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10001
TEL. (212) 691-2555

(Continued from inside front cover)

provision of basic necessities through a statewide network of fair-price shops. Keralans are mostly poor, but they enjoy a degree of social justice and self-respect that is unmatched elsewhere in the third world. And the message is clear: if Kerala can do it, so can other countries at a comparable level of development in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. What stands in the way is not any insuperable natural or technological roadblock but rather two historically conditioned sets of obstacles: lack of mass organization and political determination on the one hand and vulnerability to interference by powerful imperialist forces on the other. We have already referred to Kerala's long history of struggle which generated the indispensable organization and political determination. And protection from imperialist interference has been provided by membership in the Indian federation which for its own reasons—related to India's history of resistance to British rule—regards Kerala as strictly an internal affair. These are crucial advantages, but nowhere is it written in stone that comparable ones can never be created through popular organization and struggle elsewhere in the third world.

But this is not the only message of Kerala. If comprehensive redistributive policies can transform the life of a poor country, how much greater is the potential in richer countries! Kerala is a multiparty democracy which holds regular elections and respects their results. There are relatively rich as well as poor Keralans. There has been no violent revolution and no dictatorship by an individual or a party. If we in the United States had a mass party of working people—some 75 to 80 percent of the economically active population—is it hopelessly unrealistic to believe that we could provide all our citizens with jobs and houses and health care and a good education and social security—in other words with all the amenities of a good life? Not easy, of course. But impossible? The example of Kerala in its own small way gives hope not only to the wretched of the earth but to all who have not given up on the future of the human species.

Our old friend Hank Mayer who was a charter subscriber to MR writes that he has a complete file of issues from the beginning which, at age 88, he would like to pass along. "To me," he says, "this is an invaluable collection, so it must be also to others. The price would be what you think." Since there is no established price for a complete file, we can only say that individual volumes (of 11 issues each) are priced at \$30. That would add up to \$1,200 for the forty years from May 1949 to April 1990, the last complete volume. Anyone (including libraries) interested can write to Hank at the following address: H. C. Mayer, P. O. Box 1335, Manchester Center, VT 05255.

We record with sorrow the death of Tabitha Petran, our good friend and MR author (*The Struggle Over Lebanon*, MR Press, 1987) on October 20th from a heart attack. We knew Tabitha from the 1930s as a deeply committed socialist and champion of the rights of the Arab peoples of the Middle East among whom she lived for many years as a knowledgeable and sympathetic journalist.

"A first-rate collection that combines the insights of both analysts and activists; one of the few that includes contributions by Salvadoran participants."

—William LeoGrande, American University

"No rhetoric, no jargon, just the most authoritative analysis. A must for the serious student of El Salvador."

—Charlie Clements, M.D., author, *Witness to War*

"These essays chart the failure of U.S. policy in El Salvador and its tragic costs, while examining the forces for change and prospects for peace in a new decade. Together they offer a call to action to end U.S. support for the death-squad government in El Salvador."

**—Angela Sanbrano, Executive Director
Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador
(CISPES)**

\$12.50 • PB812X paper / \$32.50 • CL8111 cloth / 272pp.

Monthly Review Press

122 West 27th Street • New York, NY 10001 • (212) 691-2555

**LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED**